

# **A Winter Survey of Syrian Wetlands**

Final Report of the Syrian Wetland Expedition  
January – February 2004



Murdoch DA, Vos R, Abdallah A, Abdallah M, Andrews I, al-Asaad A, van Beusekom R,  
Hofland R, Roth T, Saveyn B, Serra G and Wells C

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**COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Iraq Babbler by Ian Andrews**

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## Abbreviations

IBA	Important Bird Area
Directions	N, S, E, W and NW, NE, SW, SE for north, south, east, west and north-west, north-east, south-west, south-east
P	present
NC	not counted
Wxx (1-33)	IA's nomenclature (developed using satellite photographs) of promising wetland sites
Rxx	refers to IA's nomenclature of promising riverine habitat
Pxx	refers to GPS co-ordinates (see Appendix 1)
(50000)	an estimated number

Participants' names – see below

## Participants

Name	Abbreviation	Nationality	Team
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- Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME)
- Birdlife International
- African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)
- Avifauna
- North of England Zoological Society, Chester Zoo

## Nomenclature

For English and scientific names we have largely followed Porter, Christensen and Schiermacker-Hansen (1996).

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We wish to acknowledge with gratitude the outstanding hospitality of many Syrians that made visiting Syria such a pleasant experience.





# Introduction

## Aims of the Expedition:

1. To improve knowledge of Syria's wetland birds, particularly of species threatened on a global scale, by:
  - making counts of significant winter visitors, particularly wildfowl, waders and raptors
  - making observations of the distribution of resident species and documenting fully records of globally important populations
  - identifying areas of conservation value.
2. To encourage study and conservation of wildlife in Syria, by
  - forming links with Syrian nationals, training them in conservation techniques and supplying them with relevant equipment and information
  - documenting threats to wildlife and habitats, in particular hunting pressure.

## Background

Little is known about the Syrian avifauna. The inventory '*The Important Bird Areas in the Middle East*' (Evans 1994) - referred to as the IBA Inventory - stated that 'Many parts of the country have never been visited by birdwatchers, and there has been almost no systematic fieldwork.' The IBA Inventory was based on observations by Kumerloeve in the 1960s (Kumerloeve 1967-69, 1972), MacFarlane in the 1970s (MacFarlane 1978) and Baumgart and Stephan in the early 1980s (Baumgart and Stephan 1986a, 1986b); these were summarised in '*The Birds of Syria*' (Baumgart, Kasperek and Stephan 1995). Most of these observations were made over 20 years ago, since when the population has increased rapidly and there have been major changes in agricultural practices. It is likely that Syria's wildlife has changed dramatically in this period.

There have been few recent systematic observations, but independent visits by holidaying European birdwatchers (trip reports published at OSME website, eg Hofland 1994, Wester 1998, Vandemeutter and Soors 2001, Murdoch 2002, Murdoch 2003) have indicated that much of the information in the IBA Inventory is outdated. Some IBAs have been severely damaged (Murdoch 2002) and it seems unlikely that significant bustard populations can still winter in the now densely populated northern steppes. On the positive side, there have been significant range extensions, notably of Iraq Babbler *Turdoides altirostris*, a species endemic to the Mesopotamian basin (Vandemeutter and Soors 2001, Murdoch 2003). The most exciting discovery was the location of a tiny colony of Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* by Serra *et al* in April 2002 (Serra *et al* 2003) in the desert mountains near Palmyra.

An expedition to Syria was organised for the winter of 2003-04 under the auspices of OSME. Its major objective was to make a comprehensive assessment of Syria's wetlands, with a secondary aim to train and support Syrian conservationists.

## **Wetlands of major importance:**

This list follows the IBA Inventory (Evans 1994). All Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are numbered accordingly.

### **1. Sabkhat al-Jabbul (Jabbul Salt-lake; IBA 006; a Ramsar site)**

This large salt-lake is south of Jabbul village and 35 km south-east of Aleppo. It used to dry out in most summers but the IBA Inventory (Evans 1994) states that the water level had become higher and more stable with *Phragmites* beds on its southern shores; in the early 1990s, the lake measured about 20 x 5 km (Evans 1994). Before the Expedition, there were recent observations of an interesting variety of herons, ducks and waders, notably Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (Wester 1998, Vandemeutter and Soors 2001); 150-170 White-headed Ducks were counted on 6 Feb 2003 (G. Serra pers comm). Its international importance has been recognised by Ramsar site status in 1998. A comprehensive count of such a large area was expected to be a major undertaking requiring several days' fieldwork and access to a four-wheel drive vehicle.

### **2. Euphrates Valley (IBA 010), including Lake Assad (IBA 007) and Ba'ath Lake (IBA 008)**

The entire Euphrates valley from Turkey to Iraq (420 km long) was included in the IBA Inventory, although very few data were available when it was compiled. The Inventory indicated that the valley was a very important migration route for waterbirds such as storks, waders and terns, and for passerines. Lake Assad, a reservoir of 63,000 ha constructed in the 1960s, was visited in the 1970s, when huge numbers of geese and waterfowl were noted; hundreds of Greater White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* were seen on a brief visit in 2002. Ba'ath Lake is a shallow reservoir 10 km long just below the dam that forms Lake Assad; when it was surveyed in November 1992, good numbers of ducks were recorded. A brief visit in June 2003 revealed a large wetland in good condition. Almost all the information on other sites has come from holidaying birdwatchers. Mheimideh/Sfeira Tahtani, a small oxbow near Deir ez-Zor, has been visited on several occasions (Hofland 1994, Murdoch 2003); White-headed Duck, Marbled Teal, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* and Iraq Babbler are known to breed (Murdoch 2003). A thorough survey of the Euphrates valley was a key aim of the Expedition; the specific aims were to assess its importance for wintering birds, particularly waterfowl and waders, and to identify areas that might qualify for individual IBA status.

### **3. Buhayrat al-Laha (IBA 016)**

A coastal site just north of the Lebanese border proposed as an ornithological or nature conservation reserve by a Task Force of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Activity Centre for Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas (Jeudy de Grissac 1989). The IBA Inventory states that 'the site is said to be very important for migratory birds of unspecified type, presumably waterfowl', but there appear to be no data to support this contention.

### **4. Lake of Homs/Lake Qattine (IBA 017)**

A eutrophic reservoir 15 km south-west of Homs; the extent of open water is said to vary from 3000 ha in summer to 5300 ha in winter, with a water depth of 4-8 m (Evans 1994). More than 20000 waterfowl were counted in the IWC survey of January 1993 but there have been no systematic counts since. The IBA Inventory stated that Lake of Homs was believed to be the most significant wintering site in Syria for White-headed Ducks, with counts of 100 in 1977 (MacFarlane 1978) and 30 in 1993 (Evans 1994), but there appear to be few or no recent data.

## Methods

The Expedition consisted of three teams totalling 12 conservationists of six nationalities; the teams visited from 6-17 January (A-team), 8-17 February (B-team) and 14-27 February (C-team) 2005, totalling about 30-40 days' fieldwork. Three expedition members (one per car) were English-speaking Syrian conservationists, based in Palmyra, who acted as drivers and interpreters. Each team was supplied with a list of sites to visit, laminated maps, expedition accreditation documents and standardised data sheets with which to document observations. There was considerable flexibility in individual teams' timetables, enabling them to spend longer in better sites and to move on rapidly from those of less interest; this minimised lengthy preparations beforehand. The February teams purchased Syrian SIM-cards and had regular cellphone contact while in Syria, enabling members of the C-team to check sites that the B-team had not visited.

Most sites were surveyed primarily by car; very few were small enough to assess on foot. To make best use of the short days, teams were usually in the field from dawn until dusk. Counts were not made at any specific time of day as there was no clear variation in birds' activity through the day. However, the last of the day was often spent near a reedbed or on a bridge to maximise counts of species such as Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* or Merlin *Falco columbarius*. Special attention was given to looking for species of global importance, particularly Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* in areas of grassland, Sociable Plover *Vanellus gregarius* in drier habitats, White-headed Duck on deeper water bodies and Iraq Babbler in reedbeds.

Notes were taken of hunting activity, which is banned by law in Syria (Evans 1994). The Syrian members of the Expedition specifically asked people met on site (both hunters and local people) about the level of hunting activity, the reasons for it and the main quarry species.

The Expedition used large-scale road maps provided free of charge by the Tourist Department of the Syrian government or downloaded free from Internet sites. The latter included ex-Soviet 1:100k maps from the University of California, Berkeley; Landsat maps from the University of Maryland Global Land Cover Facility; and satellite photographs taken from the NASA International Space Station Crew Imagery website. Internet sites provided highly detailed, up-to-date information of great value for locating promising areas of habitat. Before the Expedition left, IA made laminated maps of the Euphrates valley sites, using photographs downloaded from the Net. For the three reservoirs in the upper part of the valley, Lakes Tishreen, Assad and Ba'ath, as well as the Lower Khabur reservoir south-east of al-Hasakah, he was able to distinguish between steep and shallow shorelines, directing expedition members towards the most interesting areas of habitat. For the river Euphrates below ar-Raqqa, he developed a system of numbering water bodies (up to W33) and riverine habitat (up to R12), which was immensely helpful in focussing the Expedition's efforts; it also made site identification unambiguous and simplified record-taking. In this Report, areas of habitat in the lower Euphrates are designated where possible by the Andrews classification.

GPS systems (Garmin 72 and Garmin E-trex) were used to record data on routes followed and distances between sites; they were very useful in areas such as Lake Tishreen where formal maps were unavailable. In conjunction with the NASA maps, the GPS co-ordinates made relocation and mapping of interesting habitat much simpler. After the Expedition, an ArcGIS mapping system was used to transpose the GPS tracks onto NASA maps, thus mapping the routes that Expedition teams had followed. Photographs were taken of habitats and birds with digital cameras and were copied on to CDs, which have been sent to the supporting organisations and other appropriate bodies.

To support the team of conservationists in Palmyra and to encourage the interest of other nationals, Expedition members brought books, binoculars, telescopes and tripods. We are very grateful to the naturalists who donated equipment such as telescopes and binoculars. We would like to acknowledge a grant from the North-west England Zoological Society, Chester Zoo, for purchase of field guides, which were warmly welcomed by Syrian conservationists. The Dutch Birding Association kindly provided the Palmyran guides with T-shirts and caps.

# Results

This information is presented in five sections:

Section 1 - Itineraries of individual teams with significant observations (pages 11-43)

Section 2 - IBAs and other sites – updated information (pages 44-66)

Section 3 - Bird species list (pages 67- 99)

Section 4 - Conservation issues, notably evidence of hunting (pages 100-101)

Section 5 - Gifts and donations (page 101)

Certain records have been highlighted:

- **SOCIABLE PLOVER** = Red Data Book: Endangered or Critically Endangered species
- **Greater Spotted Eagle** = Red Data Book: Vulnerable, Conservation Dependent or Near Threatened species
- Red-breasted Merganser = unusual record or high count

## Results, Section 1 - Itineraries of individual teams with significant observations

### A-team itinerary

#### 5 January

Non-Syrian team members (CW, DM, TR) arrive at Damascus

#### 6 January

10.00-12.00

CW, DM, TR travel from Damascus to Palmyra to meet Aal-A

Weather: mild, sunny, still

**Interesting species/counts:**

Finsch's Wheatear

several, some singing, Damascus – Palmyra

16.30-17.00 (dusk)

Sed Wadi Abied (P100)

See Table 8, page 117

Habitat: see page 65

Weather: cool, overcast, still, initially good visibility but later poor

Assessment of coverage: reasonable but incomplete; curtailed by fading light

**Interesting species/counts:**

Shelduck

3

Merlin

2-3

Linnet

Thousands roosting in reedbed

#### 7 January

06.50-16.00

IBA 009 Lake of Homs, E, S and SW sides (P94-99)

See Table 2, page 110

Habitat: see page 64

Weather: until 10.00, overcast, rain with clear spells, light NW wind and good visibility. From mid-morning, progressively deteriorating, with icy squalls and strengthening wind; visibility variable but often less than 100m

Assessment of coverage: ducks at eastern end accurately counted; appalling weather thereafter made counting impossible.

**Interesting species/counts (in view of the appalling weather, these are often gross underestimates):**

Little Egret

210 flying out at dawn, clearly coming from a roost at eastern end of

Lake

Cattle Egret

18

White Pelican

Feathers from a long-dead individual, probably an adult, west side

Shoveler

4000+

Pochard

850

Tufted Duck	250
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	7 at south-east end (close to phosphates factory)
Lapwing	50-100
Wood Sandpiper	1
Eurasian Curlew	1
Little Gull	5
Whiskered Tern	200
Calandra Lark	20 on rocky ground

## 8 January

See Table 8, page 117

**07.50-08.20** IBA 016 Buhayrat al-Laha (P86)

Habitat: seepage 63

Weather: cool, overcast, still, with good visibility

Assessment of coverage: good enough to assess the area

**Interesting species/counts:**

Common Buzzard	2
Jack Snipe	1

**09.50-13.10** IBA 009 Lake of Homs, NW corner and N side (P89, P90)

See Table 2, page 110

Habitat: see page 64

Weather: cool, still, some drizzle, hazy with adequate visibility

Assessment of coverage: reasonable but not comprehensive (floods restricting access)

**Interesting species/counts:**

Cattle Egret	9
Shoveler	1320
Pochard	3500
Coot	3000+
Lapwing	44
Whiskered Tern	260

## 9 January

**07.30-10.50** Travel from Aleppo to Lake Tishreen

Weather: very cold, with strong easterly wind and frequent sleet; visibility usually about 200 m

Assessment of coverage: transitory, very superficial

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black Kite	2
------------	---

**10.50-17.00** IBA 010 Lake Tishreen N of Karakozak bridge (incl P21-P23)

See Table 3, page 111

Habitat: see page 47

Weather: very cold, overcast with some sleet, moderate easterly wind; visibility initially 1 km, later increasing to 5 km

Coverage: 5 km along western side and 10 km along eastern side

Assessment of coverage: adequate but (on eastern side) not comprehensive

**Interesting species/counts:**

Red-crested Pochard	30
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	5
Merlin	3
Coot	8000
Rook	300
Jackdaw	500

## 10 January

**06.30-08.40** IBA 010 Euphrates N of Lake Tishreen (P16, P18)

Habitat: see pages 47 and 48

Weather: cold, still, mostly sunny – a welcome change!

Assessment of coverage: incomplete (close to the Turkish border!)

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	120 flying south from Turkey
White-fronted Goose	12 flying south
Black-tailed Godwit	12 flying over
Isabelline Shrike <i>arenarius</i> -type	1
Tree Sparrow	1

**08.40-17.00****IBA 010 Lake Tishreen, northern end and E side (including P24)****See Table 3, page 111**

Habitat: see page 48

Weather: cold, still, increasingly overcast but no rain

Assessment of coverage: incomplete to do justice to this superb area

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	240
Squacco Heron	1
Night Heron	120 at roost
Bittern	1
Little Egret	57
Ruddy Shelduck	12
Pochard	16200 (including birds seen on 9.1)
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	475
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	1
Marsh Harrier	120
Hen Harrier	10
Peregrine	1
Coot	64500 (including birds seen on 9.1)
Lapwing	45
Redshank	144
Whiskered Tern	760
<u>Sand Martin</u>	6
<u>Iraq Babbler</u>	flock of 7 (range extension of 200 km)

**11 January****08.30-09.15****IBA 010 Euphrates upstream of ar-Raqqa (P51)**

Habitat: fields with little habitat for wildlife

Weather: overcast, cool, some rain, good visibility

Assessment of coverage: transitory, very superficial

Nothing of note

**09.30-17.00****IBA 008 Ba'ath Lake, N and (briefly) S sides****See Table 4, page 112**

Habitat: see page 51

Weather: overcast, cool, moderate north-easterly wind but no rain, good visibility

Assessment of coverage: mostly rapid but adequate; south-eastern corner (close to Ba'ath dam) and upper 3 km of lake (close to Assad Dam) avoided for security reasons

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black-necked Grebe	625	
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	136	(including birds seen on 13.1)
Bittern	4	(including birds seen on 13.1)
Greylag Goose	1	
Red-crested Pochard	285	
Pochard	5100	
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	51	
Coot	23500	
Common Snipe	237	(including birds seen on 13.1)
Whiskered Tern	500+	(including birds seen on 13.1)
<u>Sand Martin</u>	1	
Fan-tailed Warbler ( <i>Zitting Cisticola</i> )	1	
Bearded Tit	20+	
Reed Bunting	40+	

## 12 January

### 06.30-07.30 IBA 010 Euphrates near ar-Raqqa

Weather: cold with bitter easterly wind

Assessment of coverage: transitory, very superficial

#### Interesting species/counts:

Black Kite 7

### 08.30-10.30 IBA 007 Lake Assad, SE corner (P26, P27)

See Table 5, page 113

Habitat: see page 49

Weather: mostly sunny, cold, with bitter, strong easterly wind (but mild out of the wind); good visibility

Assessment of coverage: adequate but not comprehensive

#### Interesting species/counts:

Black-necked Grebe 240

Great White Egret 60

### 11.00-11.20 IBA 007 Lake Assad, S side

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: a brief sample at one point

#### Interesting species/counts:

Very little of note

### 12.00-17.30 IBA 007 Lake Assad, W side (P29-31)

See Table 5, page 113

Weather: cool, mostly grey with strong easterly wind; good visibility

Assessment of coverage: incomplete; a very interesting shoreline difficult to access

#### Interesting species/counts:

Black-necked Grebe 410

Pygmy Cormorant 43

Great White Egret 120

White-fronted Goose 140

Ferruginous Duck 25

Coot 6100

Whiskered Tern 2640

Bearded Tit Several heard

## 13 January

### 06.50-09.20 IBA 008 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment on S side (P45)

See Table 4, page 112

Habitat: see page 51

Weather: cool, overcast, still; visibility good

Assessment of coverage: good but not comprehensive

#### Interesting species/counts:

Pygmy Cormorant see 11.1

Bittern see 11.1

Gadwall 38

Common Snipe see 11.1

Red-throated Pipit >100

Iraq Babbler 8

Bearded Tit heard at 2 sites

Starling 5000 going to roost

Dead Sea Sparrow 30

Reed Bunting 40+

### 09.20-10.40 Steppes N of Ba'ath Lake

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: transitory, very superficial

#### Interesting species/counts:

Nothing of note

**10.40-13.00** IBA 007 Lake Assad, NE corner W to Qalaat Jabber (P32)

See Table 5, page 113

Weather: warm, sunny, with moderate south-westerly wind, good visibility

Assessment of coverage: good but not comprehensive

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black-necked Grebe	110
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	2
Slender-billed Gull	2
<u>Bonelli's Warbler sp</u>	1

**Afternoon**

Car repairs in ar-Raqqa

**14 January**

**07.00-12.00** IBA 010 Shnan oxbow W2 (P48), Huweijat Shnan R3 (P49), Euphrates

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Habitat: see page 52

Weather: cool, overcast, still; visibility good

Assessment of coverage: thorough but not comprehensive

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	40
Bittern	2
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	108
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	4
<b>Pallid Harrier</b>	1
Purple Gallinule	4
Black Francolin	1
Sardinian Warbler	1
Bearded Tit	heard at 2 sites
Iraq Babbler	3 flocks

**12.30-14.30** IBA 010 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (P53)

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Habitat: see page 53

Weather: cool, overcast, with weak easterly wind; good visibility

Assessment of coverage: rapid and not comprehensive

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	18
Black Francolin	2
White-tailed Plover	5

**15.30-16.30** IBA 010 Euphrates, Halabbiyah gorge

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Habitat: see page 54

Weather: initially as above, but with light rain rapidly becoming heavy and visibility less than 200 m

Assessment of coverage: inadequate because of weather conditions

**Interesting species/counts:**

Wigeon	130
Gadwall	200
Starling	3 flocks totalling 80000

**15 January**

**06.30-10.10** IBA 010 Mheimideh (P63, P64)

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Habitat: see page 57

Weather: cold, overcast, with weak south-easterly wind, good visibility

Assessment of coverage: reasonably thorough (though duck numbers difficult to estimate accurately)



**Interesting species/counts:**

Grey Heron	45
Teal	690
Pochard	820
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	45
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	21
Purple Gallinule	5
Spur-winged Plover	13
Black-tailed Godwit	2
Ruff	45
Water Pipit	20
Citrine Wagtail	1
Iraq Babbler	3 flocks
Desert Finch	10

**10.40-11.30****IBA 010 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (P62)**

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Habitat: see page 56

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Ringed Plover	11
Little Stint	25

**11.40-12.40****IBA 010 Euphrates, Halabbiyah gorge (P54-P58)**

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: thorough (completion of previous count)

**Interesting species/counts:**

Spur-winged Plover	6
Common Sandpiper	2

**12.40-14.40****IBA 010 Riverine forest/Euphrates above Halabbiyah R11-12 (P107)**

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Habitat: see page 54

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: superficial (forest viewed from the other bank)

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	7
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	1
Raven	1 pair

**14.40-16.40****IBA 010 al-Mustah salt fields 13 km WNW of Halabbiyah (P59)**

See Table 6, pages 114 and 115

Habitat: see page 54

Weather: as above; visibility dropping rapidly by 1620

Assessment of coverage: adequate but not comprehensive, because of the openness of the site and onset of dusk

**Interesting species/counts:**

Shelduck	32
Teal	1300
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	1
Avocet	23
Lapwing	650
White-tailed Plover	2
Golden Plover	4
Ruff	55
Black-tailed Godwit	150
Eurasian Curlew	18
Armenian Gull	120
Great Black-headed Gull	8

## 16 January

See Table 7, page 116

06.30-07.30

IBA 010 Euphrates at Deir ez-Zor (P67)

Habitat: see page 59

Weather: cool, overcast, still, with dense fog; poor visibility

Assessment of coverage: poor because of the weather conditions

**Interesting species/counts:**

Night Heron	4
Iraq Babbler	1 flock
Siskin	1 heard flying over

07.50-08.20

IBA 010 Oxbow W22 downstream from Deir ez-Zor

See Table 7, page 116

Habitat: oxbow in good condition with open water fringed by reeds; few houses

Weather: cold, overcast, moderate easterly wind, good visibility

Assessment of coverage: rapid but adequate to assess its value

**Interesting species/counts:**

Long-legged Buzzard	2
Marsh Harrier	4

08.20-09.10

IBA 010 Euphrates at oxbow W22

See Table 7, page 116

Habitat: quiet stretch of river fringed by reeds with shingle banks holding small wader roosts

Weather: cold, overcast, moderate easterly wind, good visibility

Assessment of coverage: rapid but adequate to assess its value

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Stint	2
Green Sandpiper	3
Great Black-headed Gull	5

09.30-10.00

IBA 010 Huweijat wood close to oxbow W22

Habitat: riverine woodland up to 10 m tall in good condition with several grassy clearings

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: brief, rather superficial visit

**Interesting species/counts:**

Iraq Babbler	heard only
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11.45-12.45

IBA 010 Euphrates and riverine forest at Huweijat al-Jurdi (P73, P74)

See Table 7, page 116

Habitat: see page 61

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: very superficial as the forest was viewed from the other bank

**Interesting species/counts:**

Pygmy Cormorant	9
Grey Heron	40
Little Bittern	1
Night Heron	9
Greater Spotted Eagle	1
Black Kite	40

13.00-15.20

IBA 010 Abu Hammam W30-32 (P76-P78)

See Table 7, page 116

Habitat: see page 62

Weather: as above

Assessment of coverage: superficial visit to a very large, open site

**Interesting species/counts:**

Quail	1
Black-winged Stilt	1
Kentish Plover	13
Turkestan Shrike	1

## 17 January

08.00-12.00

IBA 018 Palmyra badia and Sabkhat Muh

See Table 8, page 117

Habitat: stony desert with seasonal sabkhat recently filled with water (see Evans 1994, for description)

Weather: in the early morning, mild and still with dense fog and visibility under 100 m, burning off by 10.00 to give strong sunshine with good visibility

Assessment of coverage: brief foray into the steppe; good assessment of western end of seasonal salt-lake south-east of Palmyra

### Interesting species/counts:

Shelduck	46
Teal	380

pm

Return to Damascus

## 18 January

Non-Syrian team members fly home from Damascus; Aal-A returns to Palmyra

## B-team itinerary

## 8 February

00.00-03.00

IA and BS arrive in Damascus to meet GS and MA

Early morning

Travel from Damascus to Lake of Homs

11.45-12.30

IBA 009 Lake of Homs, southern shore (P99)

Description of Lake of Homs: see page 64

Habitat: inundated fields, densely populated, with small islet offshore

Weather: sunny, windy but strong north-westerly wind

Assessment of coverage: superficial

Comments: the water level in Lake of Homs was very high and many of the surrounding cultivated fields were inundated; as a result, areas that appear on satellite photos as reedbeds had just a few reeds showing.

We saw no hunters and just a few discarded cartridges. There were a few fishing boats out on the lake.

The large flocks of waterfowl were keeping to the centre of the lake.

### Interesting species/counts:

Cormorant	70
Grey Heron	20
Teal	>410
Tufted Duck	70
Black-headed Gull	100
Zitting Cisticola	1
Serin	10

14.30-15.30

IBA 009 Lake of Homs, Dbeen (P94)

Habitat: basalt rock with flooded fields; small reedy islands offshore with what were probably flooded reedbeds

Weather: sunny, windy

Assessment of coverage: reasonably thorough from the western shore

### Interesting species/counts:

Great White Egret	20
Grey Heron	30
Shoveler	150
Wigeon	100
Pochard	5000
Coot	3500
Lapwing	50
Black-headed Gull	1000
Whiskered Tern	600-1000

**15.30-dusk****IBA 009 Lake of Homs, S of Dbeen (P95)**

Habitat: inundated and cultivated fields

Weather: sunny, windy

Assessment of coverage: reasonably thorough from the western shore

Comment: good lapwing habitat

**Interesting species/counts:**

Cattle Egret	5
Pintail	50
Common Buzzard	1
Merlin	1
Lapwing	2300
Dunlin/Little Stint	30

**9 February****08.00-09.30****IBA 009 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (P96)**

Habitat: inundated and cultivated fields with plenty of good Lapwing habitat

Weather: sunny and warm, no wind

Assessment of coverage: thorough, with a complete survey of southern and western sides of the lake

Access: a minor road gives access from the main road to the lake shore; the turning is to the north between two stones at **P113**.

**Interesting species/counts:**

Great White Egret	25
Grey Heron	55
Pintail	250
Ringed Plover	20
Lapwing	2000 (probably same flock as 8 February)
<b>SOCIABLE PLOVER</b>	1
Dunlin	20
Little Stint	20
Redshank	50
Eurasian Curlew	9
Black-headed Gull	500
Skylark	100

**09.45-11.00****IBA 009 Lake of Homs, eastern side of village near Moudan (P97)**

Description: shallow bay with cemetery on hill

Weather: sunny, no wind

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Egret	10
Great White Egret	20
Great Black-headed Gull	1 adult
Black-headed Gull	3000
Whiskered Tern	10-20

**Afternoon****IBA 009 Lake of Homs, NW corner of lake (P91)**

Habitat: stony area with basalt rocks, small streams and a chicken farm

Weather: sunny and warm

Comments: the north-western corner of Lake of Homs is a stony area far from the main road; the condition of the local roads makes access difficult. The area might be interesting as some waterfowl were seen in the distance and it looks good habitat for Little Bustard (cf Golan Heights), but hunting pressure is probably very high. The Common Jackals were very easy to see; they are said to feed on dead chickens from the chicken farm.

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Egret	20
Red-throated Pipit	2-3
Common Jackal	4
Terrapin	several

**Late afternoon** **IBA 009 Lake of Homs, N shore (P89)**

Habitat: stony area with good viewpoint

Weather: sunny and warm, no wind

Assessment of coverage: incomplete (see comments)

Comments: a total of 25000-30000 waterfowl (duck/coot/grebe) was estimated from this point, mostly Teal, Wigeon, Pochard and Coot, with smaller numbers of Mallard, Shoveler, Pintail, Tufted Duck, Black-necked Grebe and Great Crested Grebe, but no **definite** Gadwall, Ferruginous Duck or Red-crested Pochard. A boat might be useful to reveal the relative abundance of individual species.

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black-necked Grebe	>200
Great Crested Grebe	>200
Cattle Egret	20
Dabbling duck	see comments
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	11
Coot	see comments
Great Black-headed Gull	1 adult
Tortoise sp	1
Apollo Butterfly sp	

**Late afternoon** **IBA 009 Lake of Homs, near dam in E**

Quick scan from road

Very little

**Dusk** **Travel to Aleppo**

Note: in two days at Lake of Homs, B-team members did not witness any hunting. However, a local source later informed GS that there is intense hunting but it usually takes place from shore-line hides, and that the local hunters knew about the Expedition survey and therefore did not hunt that day. B-team members consider the main threat to the lake appears to be the huge chemicals factory at the south-eastern end of the lake.

**B-team's survey of Sabkhat al-Jabbul, 10-12 February: general comments**

This vast site has been arbitrarily divided into three sectors: the NW Sector (saline); the Central Sector (brackish) and the SE Lake (freshwater), located in an area known as the Husayn Depression.

**Assessment of coverage:** incomplete, even after 3 days: 80% for NW Sector, 20-30% for the Central Sector and 60-80% for the SE Lake. Much of the Central Sector, particularly the eastern shore, appears difficult to access.

**Contacts:**

Mr Imad Dahman, a former government technician, in Aleppo; the team is grateful for his valuable advice on how best to survey Sabkhat al-Jabbul.

Mr Yaseen Mujawer Abu Qalil, a wildlife guard from Jabbul village, who is deeply committed to nature conservation. The team donated a bird identification guide to Mr. Yaseen, who stated that he welcomed overnight visitors to his house in Jabbul village, close to the entrance to the sabkhat. His phone number is 021 6820065. This option would be very useful for travellers without their own transport or those who do not wish to spend an hour driving out of Aleppo in the early morning. He is also a very important source of information and advice about Jabbul - but only in Arabic!

The team was privileged to meet Mr. Mohammed Said Naffous, Director of Environment in Aleppo, to whom they donated a Collins identification guide.

Mr Francis Turkelboom, from the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA).

Mr. Abdul Malek Zeino is also a guard at Sabkhat Jabbul; his phone number is 094 781388.

## 10 February

Full day

IBA 006 Sabkhat al-Jabbul

### Jabbul NW sector, Jabbul village marsh (P9)

Habitat: small river/marsh with sewage outflow outside the village and mudflats behind

Weather: 7/8 cloud, mild with no wind, a little foggy in the afternoon; water calm

Access: about 30 km east from Aleppo on main Aleppo – ar-Raqqa road, turn south (right) at sign for Jabbul. Jabbul village is about 15 km along this secondary road on the edge of the Sabkhat. A track reached through Jabbul village and accessible (when dry) by saloon car runs along the dyke; in May 2005, a gate at the north end was locked and the south end was semi-permanently blocked (D Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005).

#### Interesting species/counts:

Black-necked Grebe	25
Cattle Egret	3
Shelduck	800
Shoveler	40
Teal	60
Avocet	10
Ringed Plover	20
Kentish Plover	50
Dunlin	50
Little Stint	50
Redshank	60
Marsh Sandpiper	5
Slender-billed Gull	50
<u>Citrine Wagtail</u>	5
Water Pipit	40

### Jabbul NW/Central Sectors, start of dyke (P10)

Habitat: to the east, reedbeds and open water; to the west, open salty water. A tall just to the north was a useful vantage point.

Comments: the NW Sector to the west had been counted from P9

#### Interesting species/counts:

Black-necked Grebe	10
Great Crested Grebe	200
Bittern	1
Great White Egret	10
Shelduck	50
Shoveler	50
Teal	30
Pochard	50
Red-crested Pochard	7
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	7
Coot	500
Purple Gallinule	1
Slender-billed Gull	50
Whiskered Tern	10

### Jabbul NW /Central Sectors, further along dyke (P11)

Habitat: to the east, reedbeds and open water in the Central Sector; to the west, open salty water in the NW Sector

#### Interesting species/counts:

Great Crested Grebe	105
Bittern	2
Great White Egret	20
Greater Flamingo	590
Greylag Goose	10
Shelduck	1230
Teal	350
Pochard	144
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	4
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	8
<u>Red-breasted Merganser</u>	1 female
Whiskered Tern	200

**Jabbul NW/Central Sectors, dyke (P12)**

Habitat: a low island with reedbeds and bullrushes near dyke to the east; a peninsula to the west in the NW Sector

**Interesting species/counts:**

Squacco Heron	1
Grey Heron	140
Spoonbill	8
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	2
Lapwing	155
Dunlin	20
Redshank	60
Caspian/Armenian Gull	40
Pied Kingfisher	30 (digging nests on an island close to dyke)

**Jabbul NW /Central Sectors, Tell on the Dyke (P13)**

Habitat: a 30 m tell giving superb 360 degree views. To the east, emergent vegetation and a low island to the north-east. To the west, the NW Sector with very shallow salty water and mudflats

Comments: (1) the island to the north-east had a shallow bay on its north-west side with large numbers of ducks, for instance 1000 Pochard, visible only from the Tell at P10; (2) firing was heard at this spot.

**Interesting species/counts:**

Great Crested Grebe	50
Cormorant	80
<u>White Pelican</u>	12 (including 1 juvenile)
Little Egret	10
Great White Egret	60
Grey Heron	195
Spoonbill	42
Flamingo	1170
Greylag Goose	115
Shelduck	900
Mallard	10
Pintail	30
Wigeon	200
Teal	280
Pochard	950
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	1
Dunlin	60
Redshank	90

**Jabbul NW /Central Sectors, dyke (P14)**

Habitat: to the east, the Central Sector, with open water, sometimes shallow; to the west, the NW Sector, with a huge mudflat with very shallow water

**Interesting species/counts:**

Pintail	180
Shoveler	600
Dunlin	30
Little Stint	30

**Jabbul NW /Central Sectors, dyke (P15)**

Habitat: similar to P14

**Interesting species/counts:**

Comments: about 1000 waders of Redshank size were counted but most were too far to be fully identified; estimates were based on the ratio of identified birds. No Ruff was positively identified.

Little Egret	20
Great White Egret	136
Grey Heron	20
Spoonbill	15
Greater Flamingo	545
Shelduck	1803
Pintail	40
Shoveler	150
Wigeon	400

Teal	70
Common Crane	15
Avocet	10
Dunlin	100
Little Stint	100
Redshank	850 (see comments)
Spotted Redshank	100 (see comments)
Marsh Sandpiper	50 (see comments)

**Towards dusk** **Jabbul NW Sector, near Abu Dreicha (P3)**

Habitat: steep stony edge with no emergent vegetation facing north-east into the Central Sector

**Interesting species/counts:**

Cormorant	89
Greater Flamingo	2500
Shelduck	50

## 11 February

**Full day** **IBA 006 Sabkhat al-Jabbul, SE Lake**

Comments: the SE Lake area has a protected zone; the guards have a hut at P114. On 6 February 2003, GS counted 150-170 White-headed Ducks to the west of the guards' hut but none was seen on this visit.

Day totals:

Greater Flamingo	6200 in the middle of the lake
White-fronted Goose	>5000
Marsh Harrier	20
Hen Harrier	20

**Jabbul SE Lake, near road (P4)**

Habitat: fields, with the SE Lake in distance

Access: about 15 km east from the centre of Aleppo, where a tractor monument divides the lanes of the Aleppo-Raqqa highway, a secondary road leads south to the town of Safira. From Safira, a narrow and bumpy road follows the south-western shore of the sabkhat (first the NW Sector, then the Central Sector) and eventually past the SE Lake at a distance of several kilometres.

Weather: 6/8 cloud

Assessment of coverage: fairly thorough

Comments: mechanical problems with the car

**Interesting species/counts:**

<u>White Pelican</u>	2
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**Jabbul SE Lake, Southern shore (P5)**

Habitat: freshwater lake with open, shallow areas, reed fringes and reedbeds in the middle

Weather: 6/8 cloud, rain showers in afternoon

Comments: the shallow area on the north-west shore of the SE Lake linking it with the other sectors of Sabkhat al-Jabbul might be interesting for ducks flying between the sectors.

**Interesting species/counts:**

Great Crested Grebe	50
Cormorant	150
<u>(Lesser White-fronted Goose)</u>	1 probable)
Pintail	50
Wigeon	100
Pochard	40
Red-crested Pochard	40
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	4
Armenian Gull	20
Common Gull	1
Robin	1

**Jabbul SE Lake, Southern shore, near canal mouth at E end (P6)**

**Interesting species/counts:**

Great Crested Grebe	50
<u>Pelican sp</u>	8
Cormorant	200
Great White Egret	150



Grey Heron	20
Spoonbill	3
Greylag Goose	70
Pintail	250
Shoveler	100
Teal	100
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	25
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	1 first-winter
Purple Gallinule	1
Lapwing	30

## 12 February

12/02/04

**Early morning - early afternoon IBA 006 Sabkhat al-Jabbul**

**Jabbul Central Sector (P8)**

Habitat: reedbeds, mudflats, shallow water, fields and pasture land

Weather: sunny, mild, some wind

Assessment of coverage: thorough

Access: leave the Aleppo – ar-Raqqa road just east of the village of Deir Hafer, turning south to reach the northern shore of the Central Sector of the Sabkhat

**Interesting species/counts:**

Grey Heron	2
Greater Flamingo	1680
White-fronted Goose	500 flying north
Shelduck	8500
Ruddy Shelduck	42
Gadwall	12
<u>Steppe Eagle</u>	1 adult
Avocet	15
Kentish Plover	160
Lapwing	20
Dunlin	260
Little Stint	2640
Redshank	100
Common Gull	1
<u>Gull-billed Tern</u>	1 adult
Citrine Wagtail	1
Skylark	100
Linnet	25

**Between Deir Hafer and P8**

Dead Sea Sparrow	70
Spanish Sparrow	15
Red Fox	1
Common Jackal	Tracks found

**Late afternoon Jabbul NW/Central Sectors, start of dyke (P10)**

Habitat: to the east, reedbeds and open water; to the west, open salty water

Weather: sunny and warm

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Purple Gallinule	1
Spotted Redshank	10
White Wagtail	300 (going to roost)
Siberian Stonechat <i>variegata</i>	1
Moustached Warbler	1
Starling	500 (going to roost)

## 13 February

### Early morning

Wood Pigeon

Rook

### Travel from Aleppo to Jerablus

1

many hundreds

### Mid morning – late afternoon

### IBA 010 Lake Tishreen

Habitat: see page 47

Assessment of coverage: thorough

#### Lake Tishreen, northern end (P16)

Habitat: trees, probably poplar, and reeds along Euphrates north of Jerablus new bridge

Weather: cloudy, mild with rain at times

Comments: Expedition members saw local people firing at wildfowl, mainly Coot, and found a drowned Pygmy Cormorant tied to a fishing net.

#### Interesting species/counts:

Mallard	100 over
Teal	50 over
Chiffchaff	20
Great Tit	5
Penduline Tit	3
Rook	50

#### Lake Tishreen, SW side (P19)

Habitat: reservoir with reedbeds, islands, dead trees and buildings in open water; fields

Weather: cloudy with sun

#### Interesting species/counts:

Little Grebe	200
Great Crested Grebe	20
Cormorant	10
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	300
Mallard	20
Shoveler	50
Wigeon	20
Teal	100
Pochard	300
Red-crested Pochard	60
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	30
Marsh Harrier	35
Moorhen	30
Coot	(40000)
Common Snipe	15
Caspian Gull	4
Armenian Gull	3
Great Black-headed Gull	1 second-winter
Whiskered Tern	150

#### Lake Tishreen, SW side (P19-P20)

Common Gull 10, all first-winters, in fields

#### Lake Tishreen, SW side (P20)

Habitat: viewpoint high above reservoir by a small quarry, with nearby reedbeds and islands

Weather: cloudy and raining, with a depression getting closer

#### Interesting species/counts:

Black-necked Grebe	(200)
Great Crested Grebe	(100)
Cormorant	(200)
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	10
Wigeon	(100)
Pochard	(15000)
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	2
Coot	(50000)
Black-headed Gull	(2000)

Great Black-headed Gull	1 adult
Desert Lark	1
Rock Sparrow	10
Linnet	50

**Lake Tishreen, inlet on SW shore (where the river Bagirsak enters the lake)**

Weather: cloudy

**Interesting species/counts:**

White-fronted Goose	500 flying N
Pochard	(1000)
Coot	(10000)
Armenian Gull	10

**Evening**

Travel to ar-Raqqa

**14 February**

**Morning – noon**

**IBA 007 Lake Assad (P26-P27)**

Habitat: island of Jazirat al-Thawra (Jazirat al-‘Ayd) in the south-eastern corner of Lake Assad.

Afforested with evergreen species, *Pinus halepensis*, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Populus euphratica*, *Nerium oleander*, *Olea*, *Cupressus*, *Eucalyptus* and *Amygdalus* species.

Weather: cloudy, cold, rain later

Assessment of coverage: incomplete; poor weather conditions, large site

Comment: B-team members were accompanied by Mr Mohammed al-Sageer, director of the conservation NGO in ar-Raqqa, to whom we donated a bird identification guide.

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black-necked Grebe	5
Great Crested Grebe	90
Pochard	30
Coot	500
Black-headed Gull	50
Slender-billed Gull	1
Armenian Gull	5
Great Black-headed Gull	4 (1 first-winter, 1 second-winter, 2 adults)
Whiskered Tern	10
Woodlark	9
Barn Swallow	3
Sardinian/Ménétries’s Warbler	1 heard
Chiffchaff	10 (one ‘western-type’ call heard)
<u>Firecrest</u>	1

**Noon**

**10 km from ar-Raqqa towards Lake Assad**

Black Kite 100 loafing

**Early afternoon**

**IBA 007 Lake Assad (P28)**

Habitat: fields along southern shore of Lake Assad; eventually a brief visit to a bay with reedbeds (P28)

Weather: rain and chilly wind from early afternoon

Comments: bad weather conditions from early afternoon forced a halt to surveying

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black-necked Grebe	20
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	5
Great White Egret	10
Pochard	20
Tufted Duck	20
Coot	300
Slender-billed Gull	1
Wood Pigeon	20
Chaffinch	50
Desert Finch	20
Corn Bunting	40

**Afternoon****Resafe Ruins**

Weather: cold but dry

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little of note

**15 February****Morning (3 hours)****IBA 008 Ba'ath Lake (P33-P34)**

Habitat: lake with reeds forming fringe or islands; surrounded by low cliff (&lt;30 m). See page 51

Weather: very cold with strong north-westerly wind (wind chill -10°C). Heavy snow shower in the morning; sunny, windy and very cold in the afternoon.

Assessment of coverage: thorough

Comments: Mr Samir al-Safadi of the Syrian Society for Conservation of Wildlife (SSCW) joined the team for two days on 15.2-16.2

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	50
Black-necked Grebe	500
Great Crested Grebe	20
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	11
Mallard	200
Pochard	1300
Red-crested Pochard	300
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	14
Tufted Duck	60
Marsh Harrier	20
Coot	12500
Whiskered Tern	50
Barn Swallow	15
House Martin	1
Sand Martin	1

**Early afternoon (2 hours)****IBA 008 Ba'ath Lake, railway bridge, S side (P35)**

Weather: cold with gale force winds

Assessment of coverage: incomplete because of appalling weather

Comment: it is likely that many birds were missed because of the strong north-westerly wind

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	1
Teal	50
Garganey	2
Common Snipe	25

**Late afternoon (2 hours)****IBA 008 Ba'ath Lake, S side (P36-P37)**

Habitat: gravel pits below Lake Assad dam

Weather: sunny, very cold with gale force winds

Comments: two hunters were shooting and collecting Starlings

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black-necked Grebe	25
Cormorant	225 (200 flying to north-west)
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	>20
Pochard	1000
Red-crested Pochard	350
Tufted Duck	1000
Black Francolin	1
Coot	6000
Purple Gallinule	1 heard
Lapwing	30
Collared Dove	200
Black Redstart	2 (including 1 male <i>semirufus</i> )
Starling	20000 (flying north-west to roost)
Spanish Sparrow	100
Rock Bunting	5

## 16 February

### Morning (45 minutes) IBA 010 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (P53)

Habitat: large oxbow with extensive reedbeds and much open water. See page 53

Weather: cold, 8/8 cloud with cold easterly wind

Assessment of coverage: counts incomplete

Comments: difficult to get an overview

#### Interesting species/counts:

Pygmy Cormorant	5
White-tailed Plover	5
Common Snipe	5
Great Black-headed Gull	1

### Morning (2-3 hours) IBA 010 Euphrates N of Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (P52)

Habitat: river bend with wooded islands

Weather: cold, cloudy

Assessment of coverage: thorough count along 1.5 km stretch of river

#### Interesting species/counts:

Cormorant	20
Pygmy Cormorant	10
Mallard	10
Gadwall	620
Wigeon	40
Teal	250
Pochard	100
Red-crested Pochard	20
<u>Ferruginous Duck</u>	50
Tufted Duck	25
Marsh Harrier	10
Coot	500
Lapwing	30
Great Black-headed Gull	7
Spanish Sparrow	20

### 4 hours until dusk IBA 010 Oxbow W11 (P60, P61)

Habitat: oxbow with many reeds, shallow water and mudflats, close to houses

Weather: 8/8 cloud, a little rain; wind had dropped

Assessment of coverage: thorough

Comments: roost for waders and gulls. No Slender-billed Curlew was seen in the flock of Eurasian Curlew.

#### Interesting species/counts:

Bittern	1
Greater Flamingo	1
Shelduck	40
Shoveler	40
Teal	80
Garganey	2
Marsh Harrier	10
Avocet	5
Ringed Plover	5
Lapwing	10
White-tailed Plover	10
Redshank	40
Marsh Sandpiper	1
Black-tailed Godwit	131 roosting
Eurasian Curlew	34 roosting; some showing characteristics of race <i>orientalis</i>
Temminck's Stint	3
Black-headed Gull	500
Common Gull	3
Armenian Gull	60 (20 adults and 40 immatures)
Great Black-headed Gull	11
Iraq Babbler	10
Rook	1000 (possibly a roost nearby)

**Evening****Travel to Deir ez-Zor**

Mechanical problems with the car curtailed evening activities.

**17 February****Early morning****Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (P67)**

Habitat: River Euphrates, islands fringed by reeds; park, bushes, trees, vegetable gardens. See page 59

Weather: sunny and warm

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

<u>Night Heron</u>	92 (roosting on island)
Black Francolin	1
Coot	100
Ring-necked Parakeet	1
Redwing	2
Iraq Babbler	15

**Mid-morning****Oxbow W20 (P66)**

Habitat: barren and dry with a few remaining reeds

Weather: mostly sunny

**Interesting species/counts:**

Nothing of note

**Mid morning – late afternoon Mheimideh/Sfeira Tahtani (P63-P64)**

Habitat: reedbeds with open water and mudflats. See page 57

Weather: sunny and warm

Assessment of coverage: thorough

Comments: several flocks of sheep

**Interesting species/counts (often estimates only):**

Little Grebe	20
Bittern	2
Grey Heron	10
Greylag Goose	1
Mallard	(40)
Pintail	(80)
Wigeon	(20)
Teal	(100)
Pochard	(80)
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	(40)
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	5+ (not easy to count behind reeds)
Long-legged Buzzard	2
Water Rail	5
Moorhen	(40)
Coot	(200)
Purple Gallinule	6
Black-winged Stilt	1
Spur-winged Plover	8
White-tailed Plover	8
Ruff	(20)
Collared Dove	(20)
<u>Great Spotted Cuckoo</u>	1
Pied Kingfisher	15
Bluethroat <i>svecica</i>	1
Redwing	1
Moustached Warbler	1
Reed Warbler <i>fuscus</i>	2
Cetti's Warbler	10
Isabelline Shrike	1 female
Iraq Babbler	10

**Late afternoon – dusk**                      **IBA 010 Salt fields 4 km SE of Mheimideh (P65)**

Habitat: salty fields with shallow water and dry mudflats

Weather: sunny and warm

Assessment of coverage: thorough

Comment: the site was detected by the characteristic appearance on satellite maps

**Interesting species/counts:**

Ringed Plover	20
Kentish Plover	10
White-tailed Plover	14
Redshank	15
Dunlin	11
Little Stint	25
Temminck's Stint	15

## 18 February

**Early morning (90 minutes)**                      **IBA 010 Oxbow W27a (P68)**

Habitat: dry oxbow with reedbeds but little water

Weather: sunny

Comment: oxbow W27b (P69) was not checked as it looked barren and its reed beds were dry

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black Kite	20
Collared Dove	60
Isabelline Shrike	1
Iraq Babbler	20

**Middle of the day (2 hours)**                      **IBA 010 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (P70-P72)**

Habitat: reedbeds, mudflats, some open water, with surrounding fields and shrubs. See page 60

Weather: sunny

Comments: difficult to see the open water

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	30
Bittern	1
Long-legged Buzzard	2
Purple Gallinule	1
Siberian Stonechat <i>variegata</i>	1
Moustached Warbler	2
Graceful Warbler	20
Penduline Tit	3
Isabelline Shrike	3 adults
Iraq Babbler	10

Red Fox    1 found dead

**Afternoon till dusk (4 hours)**                      **IBA 010 Doura Europos (P75)**

Habitat: ruined city and fortifications with cliff and good views over Euphrates valley

Weather: sunny

**Interesting species/counts:**

Cormorant	25
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	50
Pochard	60
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	1
Long-legged Buzzard	2
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	1 adult
Sparrowhawk	2
Moorhen	10
Coot	150
Great Black-headed Gull	3
Rock Dove	50
(Desert) Eagle Owl	Hundreds of pellets in tower near Euphrates suggesting its presence)
Little Owl <i>lilith</i>	6
Barn Owl	1
Crested Lark	>100

White Wagtail	100
Finsch's Wheatear	3
Blue Rock Thrush	1
Iraq Babbler	>5
Jird <i>Meriones</i> sp	1

## 19 February

**Early morning (45 minutes) IBA 010 Euphrates 37 km NW from Deir towards Halabbiyah (P54)**

Habitat: river, islands with meadows and wood, gravel banks, river bends with meadows

Weather: cloudy

Comments: several flocks of sheep

### Interesting species/counts:

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	5
Mallard	50
Pintail	10
Shoveler	30
Teal	250
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	1 second-winter
Coot	200
Lapwing	150
Redshank	11
Great Black-headed Gull	1
Black Francolin	2
Golden Plover	1
Little Owl	1
Hoopoe	1
Common Jackal	3

**Morning (30 minutes) and late afternoon till dusk (60 minutes)**

**IBA 010 Halabbiyah ruins (P55) and 'See-see Partridge village' (P56)**

Habitat: Euphrates running past ruined fortress with steep basalt hills behind. See page 54

Weather: cloudy

### Interesting species/counts:

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	2
Teal	40
Black Francolin	2
<u>See-see Partridge</u>	7 (2 near Halabbiyah and 5 near village)
Coot	3500
Hoopoe	1
Desert Lark	5
Meadow Pipit	15
Finsch's Wheatear	1
Iraq Babbler	2-4
Spanish Sparrow	25

Cape Hare *Lepus capensis* 1

**Late morning (90 minutes)**

**IBA 010 Euphrates N of Halabbiyah (P107), then along river bank (P57-P58)**

Habitat: bend in Euphrates with reedy islands and small trees

Weather: cloudy

### Interesting species/counts:

Black-necked Grebe	22
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	2
Mallard	24
Gadwall	150
Shoveler	22
Wigeon	88
Teal	110
Red-crested Pochard	2



Pochard	162
Tufted Duck	55
<u>Smew</u>	2 red-heads; the first record for Syria
Black Francolin	1
Spur-winged Plover	15
Green Sandpiper	1
Common Sandpiper	2
Redshank	15
Greenshank	2
Great Black-headed Gull	2
Siberian Stonechat <i>maura</i>	2

**Early afternoon (30 minutes) IBA 010 al-Mustah salt fields 13 km WNW of Halabbiyah (P59)**

Habitat: wet, salt fields with some pools

Weather: cloudy

Assessment of coverage: brief

Comments: site previously visited by A-team

**Interesting species/counts:**

Shelduck	30
Mallard	20
Pintail	20
Avocet	15
Golden Plover	3
Lapwing	10
Redshank	20
Great Black-headed Gull	1

**Opposite petrol station in Madan Jadid**

Night Heron 140 (presumably disturbed from roost)

## 20 February

**Early morning (1 hour) IBA 010 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (P67)**

Habitat: as above

**Interesting species/counts:**

Night Heron	91 (roost)
Great Black-headed Gull	1
Penduline Tit	1
Iraq Babbler	1

**Road from Deir ez-Zor to Palmyra**

Magpie last individual seen 10 km W of Deir ez-Zor

Black Kite 25+ around dump

**Late morning (30 minutes) 'Eagle Owl cliff' E of Palmyra (P108)**

Weather: dry, sunny, little wind

Assessment of coverage: brief visit

**Interesting species/counts:**

Kestrel	5
Rock Dove	5
Skylark	many
Desert Lark	2
Temminck's Lark	2
Isabelline Wheatear	1
Desert Wheatear	2
Mourning Wheatear	2

**Late morning (45 minutes) 'Griffon cliff' E of Palmyra (P109)**

Assessment of coverage: brief visit

**Interesting species/counts:**

Griffon Vulture	7
Little Owl	1
Trumpeter Finch	1

**Midday (90 minutes)****al-Shukhna reservoir (P106)**

Habitat: a small artificial desert lake with some bare mud, a building and little marginal vegetation

Assessment of coverage: brief visit

Comment: the Ruddy Shelduck were scared away by B-team members before they were shot at. They may well have been on migration as they flew in from the south and continued on north.

**Interesting species/counts:**

Ruddy Shelduck	48
Teal	15
Kentish Plover	1
Lapwing	3
Green Sandpiper	4
Alpine Swift	8
Red-throated Pipit	2

**Cliff near Palmyra****Interesting species/counts:**

<b>NORTHERN BALD IBIS</b>	5
Brown-necked Raven	1
Chukar	2

**21 February****Early morning – late afternoon IBA 018 Talila Reserve**

Weather: sunny, slightly hazy in the middle of the day

Assessment of coverage: this large site cannot be thoroughly covered in a day, but the visit a few days later by C-team members yielded very similar results, indicating that this was a good sample

Comments: ~30 km south-east of Palmyra, with its centre ~ lat. 34.5°N long 38.5°E; the sector visited was the 'Wadi'

**Interesting species/counts:**

Crane	30
<b>SOCIABLE PLOVER</b>	4 flying
Skylark	(500)
Lesser Short-toed Lark	10
Bar-tailed Desert Lark	4
Temminck's Lark	10
Hoopoe Lark	(20)
Desert Wheatear	1
Finsch's Wheatear	1
<u>Asian Desert Warbler</u>	2-4 associating with Finsch's Wheatear
<u>Steppe Grey Shrike</u>	1
Desert Finch	2
Corn Bunting	10

Libyan Jird *Meriones libycus* common

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes 'arabica'* present

**Early dusk (30 minutes)****IBA 018 Sabkhat Muh, Palmyra****Interesting species/counts:**

Mallard	35
Shelduck	10
Shoveler	100
Teal	50
Avocet	8
Kentish Plover	2

**Evening**

IA departs for Damascus

## C-team itinerary

### 14 February

18.00

Non-Syrian team members (RB, RH and RV) arrive airport. Saleh Mohammed, Tour Co-ordinator of Transtour, waiting with vehicle

Evening

Meet AA at Baron Hotel, Aleppo

### 15 February

06.30

Leave Aleppo, driving via Manbij to Lake Tishreen

09.00-14.35

**IBA 010 Lake Tishreen, E side, from Karakozak bridge N (P22-**

**P25)**

Habitat: see page 47

Weather: partly cloudy and snowing in morning; sunny but very windy; very cold all day

Assessment of coverage: thorough, counting from viewpoints that provided good views over the lake

**Interesting species/counts:**

Bittern	1
Little Egret	44
Pochard	6346
Red-crested Pochard	45
Coot	28370

16.00-17.40

**Jerablus new bridge, evening roost count (P17)**

**Interesting species/counts:**

**Pygmy Cormorant**

416 flying north towards roost site at border/in Turkey

Night Heron

148 in willows next to the new bridge

Great Black-headed Gull

6

### 16 February

06.05-07.15

**Jerablus new bridge, morning roost count (P17)**

Habitat: see page 46

Weather: cloudy and very cold, snowing at times

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

**Pygmy Cormorant**

1374 flying south from roost towards Lake Tishreen north end marshes

Night Heron

190 in willows close to and just north of Jerablus new bridge

5 Ringed Plover and 3 Great Black-headed Gulls flying north could have been on migration

07.30-10.00

**IBA 010 Lake Tishreen, NE corner (P25)**

Habitat: see page 47

Weather: windy and very cold; heavy snowfall and poor visibility for the latter part of the count

Assessment of coverage: only moderate, as reedbeds blocked views of flocks

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	82
Mallard	206
Pochard	3870
Red-crested Pochard	187
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	98
Marsh Harrier	43
Coot	7370
Spur-winged Plover	2
Whiskered Tern	18

Reached Karakozak bridge at 1045. An attempt to drive south along the eastern shore of Lake Assad was unsuccessful because of heavy snowfall, uncertainty about the condition of the road ahead and concerns about crossing over Lake Assad's dam. A flat tyre was complicated by an inadequate jack in a blizzard. The tyre was repaired in Manbij, the Aleppo – ar-Raqqa highway was reached at 15.00, the snowfall stopped and the team arrived at ar-Raqqa at 18.00.

**Interesting species/roadcount:**

Calandra Lark	30
Desert Finch	40
Spanish Sparrow	150

**17 February**

Weather: sunny but cold, about 11° C from mid-morning

Assessment of coverage: all sites thoroughly covered except for Huweijat Shnan, where a sample site count taken

**06.00-07.10****Euphrates 10 km W of ar-Raqqa, dawn count at P51****Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	21
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	6
Coot	516
Lapwing	378 (from roost)
Armenian Gull	429 (from roost)
Common Gull	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1
Magpie	57 (from roost)
Hooded Crow	100's (from roost)
Starling	1870

**08.00-10.00****IBA 010 Oxbow W1 (P47)****Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	17
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	132 (westernmost corner)
Coot	1140
Iraq Babbler	7
Moustached Warbler	1 singing

**10.30-13.00****IBA 010 Shnan oxbow W2 (P48), Huweijat Shnan R3 (P49), Euphrates**

Habitat: see page 52

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	6
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	5
<b>Greater Spotted Eagle</b>	3
Lapwing	95
Penduline Tit	9
Iraq Babbler	11
Chaffinch	48
Rook	Thousands

**13.30-14.30****IBA 010 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (P50)**

Comments: site appeared to be totally drained

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	1
Iraq Babbler	1
Common Stonechat	7

**Early afternoon****Hills N of Euphrates**

Comments: hills severely overgrazed

Alpine Swift	1, clearly on migration
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**Mid-afternoon****Local police station**

Visit to stamp AA's travel documents

**16.45-17.30 Euphrates, W new bridge at ar-Raqqa, dusk count**

Weather: cloudy, windy and cold

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	178
Coot	581
Spur-winged Plover	3

**18 February**

Weather: cold, cloudy, slight NE wind

**07.30-08.45 IBA 010 Jdeda oxbow W6 (P79, P80)**

Assessment of coverage: thorough; all the open water viewed

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	32
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	6
Long-legged Buzzard	4
<b>Pallid Harrier</b>	1 male
Black Francolin	1 male
Lapwing	24
Moustached Warbler	3
Siberian Stonechat <i>maura</i>	1 male
Iraq Babbler	10+
Dead Sea Sparrow	17
Common Jackal	2

**09.30-11.30 IBA 010 Oxbow W13 (P81)**

Habitat: two-thirds dried out, possibly drained

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	26
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	3
Bittern	1
Avocet	5
Common Snipe	48
Pied Kingfisher	26
Meadow Pipit	15
Water Pipit	30
<u>Siberian Water Pipit</u> <i>japonicus</i>	1; potentially the first record for Syria
Siberian Stonechat <i>variegata</i>	2 males
Isabelline Shrike <i>arenarius</i> -type	1 male

**11.30-midday IBA 010 Oxbow W14 (P83)**

Habitat: little water left

Very few birds at all

**Midday IBA 010 Euphrates between oxbows W13 and W14 (P82)**

Assessment of coverage: incomplete; an indicative site count

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	2
Teal	110
Coot	411
Spur-winged Plover	2
Iraq Babbler	1 heard

**14.30-15.30 IBA 010 Euphrates at Zalabbiyah**

Habitat: see page 54

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	8
Coot	3830
White Wagtail	Hundreds
Desert Lark	2
Finsch's Wheatear	3 males

**16.00-16.30**

**IBA 010 Euphrates, small Huweijat reserve on N bank  
S of Zalabbiyah (P84)**

Habitat: some forestry plantations with willow trees bordering the river

Assessment of coverage: indicative site count/pre-dusk roost count

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	47 (46 flying north-west; 1 flying south-east)
Merlin	1
Black-headed Gull	42 flying north-west
Armenian Gull	13 flying north-west
Great Black-headed Gull	1 flying north-west
Wood Pigeon	8
Chaffinch	Tens

**1800**

**Arrived at Deir ez-Zor and met up with B-team members**

## **19 February**

Weather: still, mostly sunny with a strong north-westerly wind from noon onwards; cloudy from late afternoon

**08.00-12.30**

**IBA 010 Mheimideh (P63, P64)**

Habitat: see page 57

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	31
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	1
Bittern	5
Little Bittern	1 male
Grey Heron	19
Greylag Goose	1
Mallard	72
Pintail	62
Shoveler	114
<b>Marbled Teal</b>	4
Teal	249
Pochard	245
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	17
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	5
Moorhen	16
Coot	769
Purple Gallinule	3
Black-winged Stilt	2
Spur-winged Plover	4
White-tailed Plover	~40
Pied Kingfisher	50
Yellow Wagtail <i>flava</i>	male
Citrine Wagtail	3
Moustached Warbler	3
Iraq Babbler	11 (2 flocks)

**Late morning**

**Deir ez-Zor, Agricultural University grounds on N side of river**

**Greater Spotted Eagle**

1 flying over

**14.15-15.15**

**IBA 010 Oxbow W23 (P85)**

Habitat: site partly drained

Assessment of coverage: thorough

Comments: lack of waterbirds might be due to salinity of site.

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	22 flying south-east; seen over river from afar
Iraq Babbler	3
Dead Sea Sparrow	3

**15.30-16.30** **Fields NE of Tell al-Zabary ruins (P110)**

Habitat: saline fields and reed-fringed irrigation channels

Assessment of coverage: incomplete

**Interesting species/counts:**

Kentish Plover	45
Dead Sea Sparrow	5

**20 February**

Weather: still, sunny

**07.15-11.30** **IBA 010 Euphrates, al-Ashara oxbow W28 (P70-P72)**

Habitat: see page 60

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	22
Bittern	1
Grey Heron	20
Teal	48
Water Rail	2
<u>Little Crake</u>	1 first-winter female
Coot	97
Purple Gallinule	1
Common Snipe	19
Jack Snipe	1
Common Kingfisher	2
Pied Kingfisher	9
White Wagtail <i>dukhunensis</i>	3
Water Pipit	23
Red-throated Pipit	1
Eurasian Reed Warbler	1 heard
<u>Clamorous Reed Warbler</u>	1, probably the first record for Syrian Euphrates
Moustached Warbler	3
Common Stonechat	3
Siberian Stonechat <i>maura</i>	1 male
Siberian Stonechat <i>variegata</i>	1 male
Iraq Babbler	15
Isabelline Shrike <i>arenarius</i> -type	3
Turkestan Shrike	1 taking a green frog

**12.15-12.30** **IBA 010 Euphrates, gull roost (P111)**

Habitat: gravel bank on N bank of river

Assessment of coverage: indicative site count

**Interesting species/counts:**

Armenian Gull	56
Great Black-headed Gull	21

**13.00-14.15** **IBA 010 Euphrates, Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (P76)**

Habitat: see page 62. The river was not visited at this point.

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	26
Shoveler	24
Pochard	72
Red-crested Pochard	10
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	18
Coot	564
Moustached Warbler	2
Siberian Stonechat <i>maura</i>	1 male
Siberian Stonechat <i>variegata</i>	2 males
Iraq Babbler	2

**14.30-15.45 IBA 010 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (P77, P78)**

Habitat: dried-out saline mudflats. See page 62

Assessment of coverage: incomplete, only northern half sampled

**Interesting species/counts:**

Avocet	20
Ringed Plover	26
Kentish Plover	6
White-tailed Plover	13
Dunlin	8
Little Stint	23
Redshank	11
Spotted Redshank	10
Ruff	69
<u>Long-eared Owl</u>	1 found dead (status uncertain)
Water Pipit	7
Common Stonechat	7
Siberian Stonechat <i>variegata</i>	1 male
Isabelline Shrike <i>arenarius</i> -type	3
Iraq Babbler	6

**21 February**

Weather: cloudy, with strong, cold SE wind

**06.00-07.30 Road between Deir ez-Zor and al-Hasakah****Interesting species/counts:****Pallid Harrier** 2 males**08.00-11.30 Lower Khabur reservoir (P101-P103)**

Habitat: reservoir 20 km long; see page 65

Assessment of coverage: thorough count of eastern side only

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	19
Black-necked Grebe	10
Great Crested Grebe	26
Cormorant	223
White-fronted Goose	2307
Ruddy Shelduck	9
Mallard	137
Teal	520
Pochard	660
Red-crested Pochard	98
<u>Sniew</u>	14 (all redheads; second record for Syria)
Coot	545
Eurasian Curlew ( <i>orientalis</i> ?)	1
Slender-billed Gull	8
Hoopoe	1
Isabelline Wheatear	1

**12.30-13.15 Upper Khabur reservoir (P104)**

Habitat: small reservoir south of Darbahsiyah; see page 66

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Little Grebe	243
Black-necked Grebe	67
Shoveler	331
Pochard	170
Red-crested Pochard	14
Coot	907
Lapwing	29

**Mid-afternoon Tal Brak ruins NE of al-Hasakah**

Habitat: archaeological site with minimal vegetation

Assessment of coverage: brief visit only



**Interesting species/counts:**

Merlin	1
See-see Partridge	1 pair
Barn Owl	1

**Late afternoon****Meadows between Tal Brak and al-Hasakah (P105)**

Habitat: arable land and meadows

**Interesting species/counts:**

<b>Pallid Harrier</b>	1 male
Merlin	1
Lapwing	44
<b>SOCIABLE PLOVER</b>	3 associating with Lapwings

**22 February**

Weather: sunny with very cold wind

08.15 Left Deir ez-Zor

**11.45-12.30****Qasr el-Hair es-Sharqi desert castle**

Comment: contrary to locals' stories, there was no sabkhat (desert lake) at Qasr el-Hair es-Sharqi

**13.50-14.00****al-Shukhna reservoir E of Palmyra (P106)**

Habitat: a small artificial desert lake with some bare mud, a building and little marginal vegetation

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Greater Flamingo	1
Shelduck	5
Shoveler	5
Swallow	9

**16.30-17.30****Cliffs near Palmyra****Interesting species/counts:**

<b>NORTHERN BALD IBIS</b>	5
Brown-necked Raven	1

**23 February**

Weather: sunny, cold wind

**06.00-15.30****Talila reserve**

Assessment of coverage: incomplete due to size of site and inaccessibility of terrain

**Interesting species/counts:**

Quail	1, targeted by a Great Grey Shrike
Common Crane	46
Skylark	500
Lesser Short-toed Lark	25
Bar-tailed Lark	15
Temminck's Lark	12
Hoopoe Lark	12
Isabelline Wheatear	13
Finsch's Wheatear	28
Sardinian Warbler	2
Spectacled Warbler	1
<u>Asian Desert Warbler</u>	5 (first record for Syria if accepted)
Great Grey Shrike	3
<u>Steppe Grey Shrike</u>	1 first-winter (first record for Syria if accepted)
Desert Finch	8

Red Fox	4
Cape Hare <i>Lepus capensis</i>	1
Libyan Jird <i>Meriones libycus</i>	numerous
Vagrant Emperor dragonfly <i>Hemianax ephippiger</i>	1

## 24 February

Weather: sunny, cold wind

09.00-17.30

Hamad desert SE of Palmyra

Habitat: stony desert stretching to the Iraqi border about 150 km away

Assessment of coverage: incomplete due to size of area

### Interesting species/counts:

Steppe Eagle	3 adults
<b>Pallid Harrier</b>	1 female
<u>Lanner Falcon</u>	1 first-winter, captive in bedouin tent
Common Crane	3
Greater Sand Plover	7
Skylark	numerous
Lesser Short-toed Lark	25
Desert Lark	2
Bar-tailed (Desert) Lark	3
Calandra Lark	15
Temminck's Lark	15
Hoopoe Lark	3
Isabelline Wheatear	5
Desert Wheatear	1 male
Finsch's Wheatear	1
Desert Finch	1

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes arabica* 1

## 25 February

Weather: sunny with cold wind

06.15-16.00

Hamad desert SE of Palmyra

### Interesting species/counts:

Steppe Eagle	5 adults
Merlin	2
Quail	1
Common Crane	3
Cream-coloured Courser	4 (heard only)
Greater Sand Plover	3
<u>Black-bellied Sandgrouse</u>	1 pair flushed (remarkably, these were the only sandgrouse encountered)
Pallid Swift	1
Swift sp	1 (probable Pallid)
Hoopoe	6
Skylark	numerous
Woodlark	2
Greater Short-toed Lark	1 in songflight
Lesser Short-toed Lark	49
Desert Lark	2
Calandra Lark	9
Temminck's Lark	68
Hoopoe Lark	7
Isabelline Wheatear	17
Desert Wheatear	2 males
Finsch's Wheatear	6
Mourning Wheatear	6
Blue Rock Thrush	2 males
Great Grey Shrike	1
Trumpeter Finch	1 pair

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* 1

### Late afternoon

Palmyra ruins

Black Redstart	10
Mourning Wheatear	6

## 26 February

Weather: sunny, cold wind

**06.30-12.00** **Mount Orh uplands NE of Palmyra**

Habitat: heavily overgrazed area of mountainous steppe

Assessment of coverage: incomplete due to size of area and apparent rarity of the target species, Great Bustard

**Interesting species/counts:**

Griffon Vulture	1
Chukar	2
Rock Dove	11
Skylark	560
Desert Lark	2
Temminck's Lark	12
Isabelline Wheatear	3
Finsch's Wheatear	9
Mourning Wheatear	2
Blue Rock Thrush	2
Brown-necked Raven	1 pair at nest
Trumpeter Finch	song heard

Returning to Palmyra, C-team members contacted Syrian Arab Airlines to confirm flights but were informed that there was no flight on 1.3; as a result, they had to return on 28.2, earlier than planned.

**14.30-15.15** **Sed Wadi Abied (P100)**

Habitat: see page 65

Assessment of coverage: thorough

**Interesting species/counts:**

Black-necked Grebe	6
Teal	21
Pochard	70
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b>	5
Tufted Duck	2 males
Coot	331

**15.15-17.00** **Uplands N of Palmyra**

Habitat: cliffs in dry valley

Comment: unsuccessful attempt to locate Northern Bald Ibises at breeding cliffs

**Interesting species/counts:**

Chukar	1
Rock Dove	8
Little Owl	3
Temminck's Lark	6
Red-billed Chough	74 (in one flock)
Common Raven	2

## 27 February

Weather: sunny, slight north-easterly wind, 18°C

**05.45** Left Palmyra, taking short cut from main road towards Homs through mountains towards Hama

**07.30-08.00** **Jabal al-Bilas mountain reserve (between Palmyra and Hama)**

Habitat: a garigue landscape developing into maquis

Comment: grazing restrictions probably important in the regeneration of the habitat

Assessment of coverage: indicative site count

**Interesting species/counts:**

Chukar	4
Spectacled Warbler	5

**10.15** Arrived at Aleppo, arranged new tickets in city centre

**12.45-14.00****Sabkhat al-Jabbul, SE lake (P5, P6)**

Habitat: see page 49

Assessment of coverage: indicative site count

**Interesting species/counts:**

Great Crested Grebe	24
Great White Egret	14
Greater Flamingo	9800 (incomplete count)
Spoonbill	6
White-fronted Goose	7600
Greylag Goose	3
<b>WHITE-HEADED DUCK</b>	<b>1 pair</b>
Purple Gallinule	3 heard
Lapwing	71
Yellow Wagtail <i>feldegg</i>	1 male
Eurasian Reed Warbler	3 heard
Bearded Tit	4
<u>Iraq Babbler</u>	<b>6</b>
Isabelline Shrike	1
Dead Sea Sparrow	20
Shrew species	1 found dead

**16.00-16.45****Sabkhat al-Jabbul, NW Sector, dam in NW corner**

Assessment of coverage: indicative site count/evening roost

**Interesting species/counts:**

<u>White Pelican</u>	9 (including 2 first-winters)
<b>Dalmatian Pelican</b>	1 adult
Little Egret	25
Great White Egret	159
Grey Heron	45
Pintail	74
Wigeon	580
Coot	4200
Slender-billed Gull	170
Citrine Wagtail	1 male <b>between P1 and P2</b>

**28 February**

The Dutch members of the C-team took the early morning flight from Aleppo Airport to Amsterdam

## Results, Section 2 - IBAs and other sites – updated information

These sites are discussed in the order in which they are discussed in the IBA Inventory (Evans 1994), with sites not included in the Inventory presented at the end. The exceptions are for the short stretch of the Euphrates on the Turkish border at Jerablus and Lake Tishreen; both, for geographical reasons, sit better before Lake Assad.

### Sabkhat al-Jabbul (IBA 006)

An outstanding wetland that has already gained recognition as a Ramsar site; of major significance for its wintering Greater Flamingos, Shelducks and White-headed Ducks and very important for a wide variety of migrating waterfowl, including waders and ducks. It appears that it has become much larger in the last 15 years as a result of agricultural run-off. Information from a reliable source indicates that a chemical works may soon be built on its northern shore.

#### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P1-P15 +P114; see Map 2. Originally described in the IBA Inventory (Evans 1994).

Median altitude 310 m. Sabkhat al-Jabbul has not been a natural seasonal salt-lake since possibly the late 1980s. According to Evans (1994), the major change to the natural ecosystem took place in 1988, when a major irrigation scheme was undertaken to channel the waters of the Euphrates into the southern steppe; the run-off now drains into the basin of the sabkhat (Hans Drost, Dutch Ministry of Irrigation, pers comm 2003). The results of this hydrological connection are a gradual decrease in salinity across the sabkhat from north-west to south-east and a variation in the seasonality of water occurrence compared to more pristine sabkhats such as Sabkhat Muh.

Three main sectors can now be recognized in the sabkhat (see Map 2): the saline NW Sector, where salt extraction takes place; the brackish Central Sector, the largest, with several islands, one of which is easily accessible by a causeway; and the small, freshwater SE Lake in the Husayn depression, which receives the outflow of the irrigation channel and has extensive reedbeds. A dyke divides the NW and Central Sectors; a track accessible from Jabbul village by saloon car runs along it. Between the Central Sector and the SE Lake, there is a primitive earth dam that functions as a track for lorries and tractors; a saloon car expertly driven can just cross if the ground is dry (D Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005). The water level in the SE Lake is about 0.5 m higher than the Central Sector.

According to Drost (pers comm 2003), the total area of the sabkhat is now 260 km<sup>2</sup>. As Evans (1994) reported a figure of 100 km<sup>2</sup>, it appears that the sabkhat has increased dramatically in size during the past 10 years, probably from the influx of freshwater from the Euphrates. This information was supported by Mr. Yaseen, who stated that the water level has increased markedly over the last 12 years and is still rising. Mr. Turkelboom stated that the NW Sector and the SE Lake hold water through most or all summers.

#### Coverage

The **B-team** spent three days, visiting all three Sectors: on 10.2, the dyke between the NW and Central Sectors; on 11.2, the freshwater SE Lake; and on 12.2, the Central Sector. Weather: sunny and mild on all three days.

**Assessment of coverage:** the NW sector was well covered (80%). The SE lake (60-80%) was less thoroughly recorded, the best coverage being of the south-west corner; smaller birds in the north and east of the lake could not be identified. Large areas of the Central Sector (20-30%) were inaccessible; they could well hold huge numbers of birds such as flamingos, shelduck and waders.

The **C-team** visited this site on the afternoon of 27.2, concentrating on the SE Lake. The reedbeds along the canal entering the SE Lake were searched successfully for Iraq Babbler. Weather: sunny with little wind.

**Assessment of coverage:** a superficial visit. Haze reduced visibility beyond 800m, making scoping for ducks difficult.

**Access to site:** the south-west shore of the NW Sector and the Central Sector can be accessed by a road through the town of Safira. This road continues south at a distance of several kilometres from the western side of the SE Lake, which is about 70 km (2 hours' drive) from Aleppo city centre. The northern shores of the Sabkhat can be accessed east from Safira or from turnings south from the main Aleppo – ar-Raqqa highway to Jabbul or Deir Hafer. In May 2005, a locked gate at the northern end of the dyke prevented access by car onto the dyke, though Mr Yaseen found the man with the key. The dyke affords excellent

access, with superb views from the Tell on the Dyke (P13), but it can be difficult to find good viewpoints elsewhere in the Central Sector. The southern end of the dyke (P2) has now been blocked with semi-permanent obstacles and the track through the fields south of the dyke has been ploughed over, making it impossible to drive onto the dyke from the south (D Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005). There is a large island with many bays in the Central Sector that was previously used for military purposes; it is reached by a good track running along a causeway that starts near the south end of the dyke at P2. Expedition members did not visit the eastern shore of the Central Sector or the SE Lake; much more mapping of these areas is needed.

It is advisable to seek the assistance of Mr. Yaseen and other guards as they are very helpful and knowledgeable. 4WD drive cars are essential for off-roading in wet weather and visitors are advised to travel with Arabic speakers away from asphalt roads.

## **Birds**

### **Ducks and geese**

Over the three days (10.2-12.2), B-team members counted a remarkable 13400 Shelducks, with the largest numbers in the Central Sector, which also held 42 Ruddy Shelducks. There were 9 White-headed Ducks along the dyke in the NW Sector on 10.2, 40 scattered Ferruginous Ducks (of which 25 were on the SE Lake on 11.2), hundreds of Teal, Pintail, Shoveler and Wigeon and smaller numbers of Gadwall, Mallard and Red-crested Pochard. A female-type Red-breasted Merganser on 10.2 is potentially the third record for Syria. On 11.2, the SE Lake held more than 5000 White-fronted Geese and a probable Lesser White-fronted Goose.

On 27.2, a good selection of ducks included thousands of Shelduck and hundreds of Pintail. A pair of White-headed Ducks was found on the SE Lake; if large numbers of this species winter here, they would most probably be paired off by late February.

### **Hérons and Egrets**

On 10.2, along the dyke, there were 4-5 Bitterns, more than 200 each of Great White Egrets and Grey Herons, and smaller numbers of Little Egrets. Three Cattle Egrets were near Jabbul village. A Squacco Heron on 10.2 was an unseasonal find.

On 27.2, there were 159 Great White Egrets near the dam in the NW Sector with smaller numbers of Little Egrets and Grey Herons.

### **Other waterbirds**

The site is famous for its Greater Flamingos, of which almost 13000 were counted on 10.2-12.2 and 9800 on 27.2. On 10.2-11.2, a total of 68 Spoonbills was found, with up to 6 over the reedbeds of the southern edge of the SE Lake.

On 10.2, there were 12 White Pelicans along the dyke, with 2 White Pelicans and 8 unidentified pelicans on the SE Lake on 11.2. On the evening of 27.2, 9 White Pelicans (including 2 first-winter birds) and 1 Dalmatian Pelican were fishing close inshore near the dam in the NW Sector.

15 Common Cranes were found along the dyke on 10.2. Purple Gallinules were regularly encountered in both the NW and SE Sectors. A first-winter Common Gull was seen on 11.2. A Gull-billed Tern on 12.2 was an unseasonal record.

### **Waders**

On 10.2, there were Avocets, Black-winged Stilts, Kentish Plovers, Little Stints, Dunlins, Greenshanks, about 1000 Redshanks, Marsh Sandpipers and Spotted Redshanks along the dyke, but few Ruffs (possibly overlooked due to distance). There was a significant count of 2640 Little Stints on 12.2, with many hundreds of Dunlins and Kentish Plovers.

On 27.2, smaller numbers of waders included 1 Temminck's Stint.

### **Raptors**

On 11.2, Marsh and Hen Harriers were very common over the fields near the SE Lake. There was a juvenile Greater Spotted Eagle on 11.2 and an adult Steppe Eagle on 12.2, perhaps an early migrant.

### **Other notable species**

A small party of Iraq Babblers was seen in the reedbeds south of the SE Lake on 27.2. This is the most westerly record ever and the first Syrian record away from the Euphrates; Lake Assad, the nearest body of water in the Euphrates valley, is about 60 km to the east and the land between is (or certainly was) semi-desert.

On 10.2 there were several Citrine Wagtails near Jabbul village, probably overwintering, and on 12.2 about 70 Dead Sea Sparrows in the Central Sector.

### **Observations since the Expedition**

There have been observations in the period between the Expedition (early 2004) and the publication of this Report (summer 2005) important enough to merit inclusion in this Report.

R Porter and D Scott recorded 725 White-headed Ducks in the NW Sector on 25.1.2005, much the largest count of this species in Syria and probably 5-10% of the world population; this observation indicates that Sabkhat al-Jabbul may be one of the most important wintering sites for White-headed Duck in the world. A al-Asaad and DA Murdoch paid a brief visit in May 2005, making incomplete counts of the northern shore of the Central Sector and the southern shore of the SE Lake; observations included 7500-15000 Flamingos, up to 7 White Pelicans, at least 25 White-headed Ducks, over 200 Marbled Teal, over 200 Ferruginous Ducks and a large breeding population of Spoonbills, with at least 140 individuals on one island. The behaviour of the ducks strongly indicated breeding by all three species, though a visit later in the season would be required to achieve formal confirmation. Great Crested Grebes, Purple Gallinules and Red-crested Pochard were abundant (and were all formally proven breeding) but no Pygmy Cormorants were seen.

### **Conservation Issues**

B-team members saw hunters on the dyke though C-team members did not. Local people blamed the government for not allowing them to shoot the pelicans, egrets and cormorants that were eating their fish. Construction of a large factory planned for the northern shore could have devastating consequences for the site's wildlife.

### **Contacts**

Mr Yaseen Mujawer Abu Qalil is a guard from Jabbul village employed under the terms of the Ramsar Convention to protect the Sabkhat and to prevent hunting; his commitment to nature conservation was very clear (D Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005). He welcomes overnight visitors to his house in Jabbul village close to the entrance to the sabkhat; this option is strongly recommended, particularly for those without their own transport or who do not want to drive out of Aleppo in the early morning. He speaks very little except Arabic but he is an invaluable source of information about the Sabkhat. His phone number is 021 6820065.

Mr. Abdul Malek Zeino is also a guard at Sabkhat Jabbul; his phone number is 094 781388.

### **Assessment**

The best wetland in Syria for both numbers and variety of birds, Sabkhat al-Jabbul holds one of the largest winter concentrations of Greater Flamingo in the Middle East, substantial wintering flocks of egrets, geese, ducks and waders, and an impressive range of raptors. The Expedition's records of White-headed Duck, Dalmatian and White Pelican emphasise its importance. There are very few observations from the breeding season, a major omission that urgently needs rectifying.

There is good access to the SE Lake, the northern end of the dyke and the northern shore of the Central Sector, all of which have developed extensive reedbeds and major concentrations of attractive birds. The Sabkhat is close to the second largest city in Syria. If hides were constructed, it would have great educational potential.

**In summary, Sabkhat al-Jabbul is one of the most important wetlands in the Middle East and richly deserves its Ramsar status; it should be fully protected. Comprehensive surveys in winter and in the breeding season would be difficult but they are urgently needed.**

## **River Euphrates at Jerablus; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

A remnant stretch of Euphrates valley woodland, less than 5 km long, between the Turkish border and Lake Tishreen to the south, with which this site merges.

### **Description**

**Co-ordinates: P16 -P17; see Map 3.** A pleasant, slow-flowing stretch of river with many small islands and a strip of thick, wet riverine woodland on the eastern side; it merges imperceptibly into the head of Lake Tishreen, with extensive reedbeds and gravel workings on the western side. There are substantial wet areas, secluded pools and reed-beds on both sides of the river. A minor road runs east from Jerablus across an old (pontoon) bridge ('Jerablus old bridge') and then north up the eastern side of the river for 1 km almost to the Turkish border. Several kilometres to the south, the new bridge ('Jerablus new bridge') lies at the very head of Lake Tishreen and is the major road link between Jerablus and the eastern bank of the Euphrates.

### Coverage

The A-team spent two hours here from dawn on 10.1; it was a cold, still morning, with excellent visibility. They covered the western side of the river, from Jerablus old bridge down to the north-western corner of Lake Tishreen. They then drove slowly over the old bridge and north along the eastern side of the river without stopping (as it is very close to the frontier), making a quick habitat assessment.

The B-team made a brief visit to Jerablus new bridge on the morning of 13.2.

The C-team made roost counts of the northern part of Lake Tishreen from Jerablus new bridge on the evening of 15.2 and the morning of 16.2; they did not formally census the riverine woodland between the bridges. Weather conditions and visibility were poor with cold winds on both occasions; on the morning of 16.2, it started to snow.

**Assessment of coverage:** relatively brief by all teams; the C-team concentrated mainly on the roost count.

### Access to site

The Turkish border is so close that optics should be used with great discretion upstream of the old bridge. A driveable track runs south from the old bridge down the western side of the river, giving access (during the Expedition) deep into the reed-beds of north-west Lake Tishreen. However, in May 2005, gravel extraction had moved to the eastern side of the river and a large section of the track had been removed, preventing access deep into the reeds (D Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005). Access to Jerablus new bridge is straightforward; the bridge offers a good vantage point over a beautiful and rewarding area.

### Birds

On 10.1, several flocks of Pygmy Cormorants, totalling 120, 12 Black-tailed Godwits and 12 White-fronted Geese flew south along the river at dawn. An Isabelline Shrike showing characteristics of Chinese Shrike *Lanius (isabellinus) arenarius* was in scrub just east of Jerablus and a single Tree Sparrow was consorting with Reed Buntings in a weedy field by the river.

On 13.2, 3 Penduline Tits were in reeds close to Jerablus new bridge. On 15.2-16.2, the willows on the north-west side of the bridge held a Night Heron roost with up to 190 birds.

### Conservation Issues

Roosting birds were thought to be using the riverine forest on or at the Turkish side of the border. The trees lining the river are likely to be important for roosting Pygmy Cormorants and migrants; they are so close to the border that hunting is likely to be prohibited. A-team members did see hunters in the gravel-workings and reed-beds at the head of Lake Tishreen. Gravel extraction appeared to be creating interesting habitat such as pools and reed-beds, but indiscriminate, large-scale operations would probably damage the remaining woodland.

### Assessment

There are dams along much of the Turkish Euphrates, so this short stretch may well be the last relatively intact, undammed section of the upper Euphrates, and therefore extremely important for wildlife other than birds. For example, *Trionyx euphraticus*, a rare soft-shelled turtle, could still occur along this stretch of the Euphrates (and any others that have not yet been dammed). The area deserves much fuller assessment, notably a thorough survey in the breeding season to look for nesting colonies of Pygmy Cormorant, egrets and herons. Its importance may well be disproportionate to its size.

## Lake Tishreen (part of IBA 010)

Very little is known about this reservoir, not even the exact date when its dam was completed; according to local people, the reservoir was filled in about 1999. The wetlands that surround it are therefore new and rapidly developing. Expedition members were the first outside ornithologists to visit the site, which is not included in the IBA Inventory.

### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P18-P25; see Map 3. No information is available except from Expedition members' observations and satellite photographs. The dam was constructed close to the upper end of Lake Assad, flooding the Euphrates valley to within a few kilometres of the Turkish border. The Aleppo – al-Hasakah road crosses the reservoir over Karakozak bridge about halfway along the reservoir. Below Karakozak bridge, the reservoir appears to be relatively narrow with steep sides, few villages and few people. Above the bridge, the western side is steep with few villages but the eastern side is much lower with dense human habitation. In the north and north-east, near the village of Shyukh Tahtani, the land shelves very



gently, forming a wetland several square kilometres in extent, with large tracts of reeds, drowned trees and ruined buildings – an eerie landscape.

### **Coverage**

The A-team spent 3 hours on 9.1 travelling 5-10 km up the western side, north from Karakozak bridge, and 9 hours on 9.1-10.1 on the eastern side, north from Karakozak bridge. Weather conditions and visibility were reasonable.

The B-team spent 7 hours driving down the western side of the upper part of the reservoir on 13.2. The weather was cloudy and mild with rain at times.

The C-team censused the eastern side of the reservoir from Karakozak bridge northwards for almost 9 hours, between 09.00 and 17.40 on 15.2 and on the morning of 16.2; the weather was cloudy and very cold, snowing at times and often windy.

None of the teams made counts south of Karakozak bridge, except for birds visible from the bridge itself.

**Assessment of coverage:** the northern half of Lake Tishreen above Karakozak bridge was thoroughly covered, especially in view of the harsh weather. The southern half was not visited but looked much less promising.

### **Access to site**

Access to the northern half of the lake was relatively straightforward and a thorough count was possible; there are good roads on the eastern side above Karakozak bridge that allow a saloon car to reach the lake at many points, and a reasonable track runs up the western side from the bridge, though it appears to peter out after 5-10 km. There appear to be few or no roads along the lake south of Karakozak bridge, making proper censusing of the southern part of the reservoir very difficult. The north-western reed beds were accessed from Jerablus via a track along the river; however, in May 2005, a large section of the track had been removed, preventing access deep into the reeds (D Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005).

### **Birds**

#### **Ducks**

There were huge numbers of ducks, notably 16200 Pochard, 475 Ferruginous Ducks, 12 White-fronted Goose and 12 Ruddy Shelducks on 9.1-10.1, 16000 Pochard and 500 White-fronted Geese on 13.2, 45 Red-crested Pochard and 6346 Pochard on 15.2, and 187 Red-crested Pochard, 3870 Pochard and 98 Ferruginous Ducks on 16.2.

#### **Hérons and Egrets**

Notable records on 10.1 included a roost of 120 Night Herons and a wintering Squacco Heron at the north-east corner, 1 km south of the bridge, and a total of 57 Little Egrets. On 16.2, the early morning roost of Night Herons totalled 190 birds; 14 Little Egrets and 13 Great White Egrets were present.

#### **Other waterbirds**

On 9.1-10.1, small flocks of Black-necked Grebes were common, particularly in bays on the western side; they totalled 370, compared to about 200 on 13.2. Pygmy Cormorants were abundant; hundreds were present on 10.1, and on 16.2, the incredible total of 1374 flew south over Jerablus new bridge towards Lake Tishreen. Coot were even commoner, with estimates of 64500 on 9.1-10.1, 100000 on 13.2, 28370 on 15.2 and a mere 7650 on 16.2.

Ten Common Gulls (all first-winter) were seen on a field on 13.2. On 15.2 and 16.2, respectively, 9 and 8 Great Black-headed Gulls were seen, Black-headed Gulls were present in hundreds and Armenian Gulls in tens.

Whiskered Terns numbered 760 on 9.1-10.1, 150 on 13.2, 28 on 15.2 and 16 on 16.2. On 9.1-10.1, both Common and Pied Kingfishers were notably common.

#### **Waders**

On 10.1, there were small numbers of 9 species of wader, the most notable being a total of 140 Redshanks.

On 16.2, six species of wader seen flying north were presumably on migration. 2 Spur-winged Plovers were seen in a field bordering the eastern marsh.

#### **Raptors**

Records on 10.1 included 1 Great Spotted Eagle, 120 Marsh Harriers and 10 Hen Harriers, with a Peregrine sitting in a ploughed field 1 km to the north-east. Up to 35 Marsh Harriers were visible at one time on the morning of 16.2.

### Other notable species

On 10.1, a party of 7 Iraq Babblers was foraging in reeds at the northern end of the reservoir; they were watched at 3 m range for several minutes. This is a range extension of over 100 km from the previous most northerly record from Ba'ath Lake and raises the strong possibility that this species' range extends into Turkey.

On 10.1, six Sand Martins were feeding at the northern end of the reservoir. On 13.2, 10 Rock Sparrows and a Desert Lark were found on the south-western side of the lake at P20. A male Black Francolin was flushed from reeds on the eastern shore on 15.2. On 16.2, a male Blackcap was seen in a village garden during heavy snowfall.

### Conservation Issues

Most of the shoreline appears steep and barren with few people and poor access, but there are several large villages on the eastern shore north of Karakozak bridge. Hunting pressure at Karakozak bridge is heavy but we were told that this is less to the north. A-team members saw Coot as bycatch from fishing activities and hunters in action in the reeds at the northern end; B-team members saw local fisherman shoot a Coot, found a dead Pygmy Cormorant tied to a fishing net and heard shooting from the other side of the lake. In May 2005, there was much shooting at Turtle Doves but we were told by villagers that little else is now hunted; many ducks were conspicuously unwary (D. Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005). Further, the removal of the gravel track at the northern end was an active measure that prevented hunters penetrating deep into the reeds. We met a villager whose house abutting the reedbed was being compulsorily purchased by the Government. There seems therefore to be some evidence of active measures to conserve wildlife.

There was no evidence of any factories or other industrial activity.

### Assessment

Lake Tishreen is an outstanding wetland. These data show that it holds significant numbers of wintering Black-necked Grebes, Pygmy Cormorants, Pochard, Ferruginous Ducks, Marsh Harriers and Coot. Its geographical position indicates that it is likely to be of major importance for migrating waterfowl and raptors. The large areas of reedbed may hold significant numbers of breeding birds such as Pygmy Cormorant, Bittern, Ferruginous Duck and Iraq Babbler. Human pressure appears at present to be less than at other important sites for waterfowl, although there is hunting and disturbance by fishermen. The lake needs to be accurately mapped and further, comprehensive surveys at other seasons are essential. It undoubtedly deserves formal recognition as an IBA and a Ramsar site; it would make a nature reserve of international importance.

## Lake Assad (Buhayrat al-Assad; IBA 007)

The dam was completed in the 1960s. Few ornithological data are available, but the IBA Inventory states that huge numbers (hundreds of thousands) of ducks and geese currently winter in the area, feeding on the surrounding steppes and roosting at the site.

### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P26-P32. Well described in the IBA Inventory. Lake Assad is 80 km long and covers 63000 hectares. Much of the shoreline is steep and rocky with a pebble edge produced by wind action; in the deep, narrow bays, reeds have been able to establish themselves along the shoreline. The surrounding area is similar to Ba'ath Lake, being arid and stony with dry ravines. However, a section along the western shore that shelves gently into the reservoir has much more extensive reed beds with secluded pools, and, on the landward side, a strip of marshy ground and arable land. In the south-eastern and north-eastern corners and on the island of Jazirat al-Thawra (or Jazirat al-'Ayd), there are large areas recently afforested with a variety of evergreen species, including *Pinus halepensis*, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Populus euphratica*, *Nerium oleander*, *Olea*, *Cupressus*, *Eucalyptus* and *Amygdalus* species.

### Coverage

The A-team spent 7 hours on 12.1 and 2 hours on 13.1 sampling 5 points round the lake. These were: the Jazirat al-Thawra causeway in the south-eastern corner; an inlet with a pumping station on the steep southern shore; the western shore reedbeds; a deep bay in the north-eastern corner; and the peninsula in the north-eastern corner on which stands Qalaa Jabber, a medieval castle. Weather conditions and visibility were good.

The B-team visited Lake Assad on 14.2 but a snow storm in the afternoon limited coverage.

The C-team intended to visit the E shore on 15.2-16.2 but heavy snowfall and mechanical failures unfortunately made this impossible.

**Assessment of coverage:** inadequate. The weather conditions restricted observations to sample counts along the southern and western sides; the only part of the northern side visited was the north-eastern corner as far west as Qalaat Jabber. There is clearly more work to be done here.

#### **Access to site**

On the southern side, access by saloon car is possible at regular intervals where pumping stations have been installed. In steep sections between the pumping stations, the ground is very broken up and access would often be possible only on foot. Along the western shore, two pumping stations provide good access into the reeds and out to the lake, but elsewhere along this section it is very difficult to see the open water. At the first pumping station, there are two parallel causeways 2 km long wide enough to take cars; they provide a superb opportunity to get far out into the lake. Further, they allowed A-team members to assess an intriguing chain of small islands in the middle of the reservoir. We saw several small motorboats that would provide the best method of censusing the open water.

Jazirat al-Thawra is linked to the mainland by a causeway; access is restricted.

#### **Birds**

##### **Ducks**

On 12.1, a distant flock of about 70 White-fronted Geese flew onto the lake along the western shore and a flock of about 70 flew over after dark. Small parties of Ferruginous Ducks totalling 25 were in the reedbed pools at the northern pumping station on the western side.

##### **Hérons and Egrets**

On 12.1, Great White Egrets were common, with 60 in the south-eastern corner and 120 along the western shore.

##### **Other waterbirds**

On 12.1-13.1, Black-necked Grebes were common at all points sampled; the total count was 760, but as small groups were fishing even along the steepest sections of the lake, the total population wintering on Lake Assad is far higher. Pygmy Cormorants were feeding in all places with appropriate habitat; 43 were seen flying over to roost at dusk along the western shore. The wintering population is likely to be far larger.

On 14.2, a Slender-billed Gull was photographed next to 4 Great Black-headed Gulls. On 16.2, a first-winter Mediterranean Gull and 2 Common Gulls flew over the highway south of the lake north towards Lake Assad.

On 12.1, at least 2640 Whiskered Terns were feeding in a strong easterly wind along the western shore at the pumping station with the two parallel causeways. On 14.2, there were at least 10 Whiskered Terns near Jazirat al-Thawra, but as little of the lake could be seen and the weather was very bad, this count is of limited value.

##### **Raptors**

On 12.1, several Merlins, Hen Harriers and Marsh Harriers were hunting over the reeds along the western shore at dusk and 2 Pallid Harriers were quartering a drier area. It was disappointing that no eagles or vultures were seen; the IBA inventory notes the presence of Griffon Vultures at Lake Assad but none was recorded by members of the Expedition.

##### **Other notable species**

On 12.1, a Bonelli's Warbler sp was found in a young conifer plantation in a warm, protected valley in the north-eastern corner, and a flock of Bearded Tits and a flock of 8 Dead Sea Sparrows were seen along the western shore.

On 14.2, Jazirat al-Thawra held a Firecrest, a potential first record for Syria, and a flock of 9 Wood Lark was photographed. On 16.2, mixed flocks of Desert Finch and Spanish Sparrow were seen along the road to Maskanali south of Lake Assad.

##### **Conservation Issues**

Much of the lake shore is inaccessible and very thinly populated, but it is often very steep and appears to be of relatively little importance for waterfowl.

The island of Jazirat al-Thawra has been established as a nature park; hunting is forbidden and access is restricted, with a guard on the gate who did not permit A-team members to enter! However, there was a boat full of hunters at the other end of the causeway less than 1 km away, so the value of the reserve for waterfowl or raptors would be very limited.

The western shore has several villages with larger settlements close by on the main Aleppo-Deir ez-Zor road. A-team members observed hunting taking place in the reeds and saw a commercial duck-shooting industry in operation. It is likely that motorboats are also used for hunting. A chain of small islands off

the western shore would have great potential as reserves for breeding birds if human disturbance could be prevented.

The north-eastern corner appeared to be very quiet but our visit was brief.

There was no evidence of fishing or industrial activity but coverage of Lake Assad was very unsatisfactory.

#### **Assessment**

Lake Assad is likely to be of international importance for wintering Whiskered Tern and possibly also for Black-necked Grebe; its enormous size warrants an individual survey to assess its importance for waterbirds. The fields south of Lake Assad are a potential wintering site for Sociable Plover; this globally threatened species was recorded elsewhere in Syria during the Expedition and Lapwings were seen over these fields.

### **Ba'ath Lake (IBA 008)**

This reservoir lies immediately below Lake Assad; its dam was built in the 1960s. An IWC census carried out in November 1992 recorded large numbers of waterfowl (Evans 1994). Otherwise, there are very few data. It is included in the IBA Inventory.

#### **Description**

**Co-ordinates: P33-P46.** Briefly described in the IBA Inventory. A shallow lake 10 km long and 1-2 km wide in a steep valley, the sides of which are dry, unvegetated and heavily eroded. Describing the site upstream from the dam, there are first large areas of deep water, extensive reedbeds, areas of wet marsh with bushes, wet fields and finally, in the shadow of Lake Assad's dam, active gravel extraction. The site thus has a wide range of wetland habitats in a relatively small area that is easy to visit.

#### **Coverage**

A-team members spent 8 hours on 11.1 making comprehensive counts of the northern side to within 4 km of Lake Assad's dam, and 3 hours on 13.1 on the southern side working the marsh round the railway embankment. It was not possible to count the birds in the south-eastern corner by the dam for reasons of security. Weather conditions and visibility were good.

B-team members spent about 9 hours here on 15.2. Appalling weather, with snowstorms and bitterly cold north-westerly winds, made counts inaccurate and coverage incomplete.

#### **Access to site**

Access by 4x4 wheel drive vehicle is relatively straightforward at many points; the steep valley sides give good views. A saloon car can drive onto the railway embankment on the southern side and into the villages along the northern side. There are unrestricted footpaths onto the wet marshes and fields on both sides. However, because of security issues, it is very unwise to birdwatch from either dam or near the railway new bridge; as a result, the south-eastern corner, which has large numbers of waterfowl, is inaccessible. Care is advised in the area below the Lake Assad dam.

#### **Birds**

##### **Ducks**

On 11.1, there were large numbers of ducks, including 735 Teal, 285 Red-crested Pochard (mostly quite a way upstream), 5100 Pochard and 50 Ferruginous Duck; a single Greylag Goose flew along the northern shore.

On 15.2, 2300 Pochard, 650 Red-crested Pochard and more than 1000 Tufted Ducks were counted.

##### **Herons and Egrets**

On 11.1, noticeably scarce, the best being 3 Bitterns.

##### **Other waterbirds**

On 11.1, 625 Black-necked Grebes, 400 Little Grebes, 23500 Coots, 6 Great Black-headed Gulls and over 500 Whiskered Terns. 136 Pygmy Cormorants included several flocks flying past and small numbers (<10) fishing.

On 15.2, there were 525 Black-necked Grebes and at least 2 Caspian Gulls among the tens of Armenian Gulls.

##### **Waders**

On 13.1, over 200 Common Snipe were flushed from the wet grazing marshes.

### **Raptors**

On 11.1, good numbers of raptors included 28 Marsh Harriers but on 15.2 the gale force winds made them undetectable.

### **Other notable species**

On 11.1, a Sand Martin was near the railway embankment and Reed Buntings, Red-throated and Meadow Pipits were common in the wet grazing marshes; in the reeds, there were several flocks of Bearded Tits and Dead Sea Sparrows, a group of 8 Iraq Babbler and a single Fan-tailed Warbler, apparently a rare bird along the Euphrates valley.

On 15.2, a male Black Redstart of the *semirufus* form was found near the head of the lake.

### **Conservation Issues**

The area round the dam is densely populated; A-team members were told that relatively little shooting takes place but at least one hunter was in action and several used cartridges were found. Human effluent is no doubt piped into the water and gravel extraction takes place at the top end. The wet marshes are heavily grazed and the cattle enter the reeds. The B-team saw two hunters firing at a roost of about 20000 Starling on 15.2.

### **Assessment**

An excellent site that fully deserves its IBA status; if it could be given proper protection, it would have enormous potential as a ‘flagship’ nature reserve. In particular, the railway embankment on the southern side overlooks the wet marsh and gives superb viewing opportunities, with good access to a rich variety of habitats. Human activity here appears less oppressive than at most other Syrian wetlands. Birders visiting Syria should include it as a standard part of their itinerary.

## **Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

The Euphrates valley IBA extends for 420 km from the Turkish to the Iraqi borders; though Lake Assad and Ba’ath Lake are specifically excluded, the IBA is far too large to be treated as a whole, so, for the purposes of this Report, it has been broken up into discrete sites.

## **River Euphrates at Jerablus; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

Discussed earlier (for geographical reasons), after Sabkhat al-Jabbul.

## **Shnan area (Shnan oxbow W2, Huweijat Shnan R3; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010))**

Expedition members appear to have been the first outside ornithologists to visit this site, one of the most interesting along the river Euphrates.

### **Description**

**Co-ordinates:** P48 for W2, P49 for R3; see Map 4. The oxbow lies on the southern side of the Euphrates downstream from ar-Raqqa near the village of Shnan. The stretch furthest from the river is open water with a thick fringe of reeds, but there are extensive reedbeds along both arms of the oxbow that extend towards the river. Round the oxbow is open farmland with scattered trees. Along the river, there are areas of low thorn scrub, a wood and several marshy areas with small patches of reeds, creating an interesting mosaic of habitats.

### **Coverage**

The A-team spent 5 hours on the morning of 14.1. The C-team spent less than 3 hours on the morning of 17.2.

Weather conditions and visibility were good on both occasions. **Assessment of coverage:** the site is large and was not thoroughly covered.

### **Access to site**

Muddy tracks run down to the river but in January they required 4x4 WD vehicles and an expert driver. A canal runs parallel to the river through the middle of the oxbow; its raised banks afford good views of the reeds and would probably be driveable in a saloon car.

### **Birds**

#### **Ducks**

On 14.1, there were 108 Ferruginous Ducks on the open water of the oxbow but few other ducks. On 17.2, small numbers of ducks included 5 Ferruginous Ducks, 24 Teal and 1 Red-crested Pochard; 11 Ruddy Shelducks flew W over the Euphrates.

#### **Hérons and Egrets**

On 14.1, 2 Bitterns. On 17.2, 2 Grey Herons only.

#### **Other waterbirds**

On 14.1, 40 Pygmy Cormorants and 4 Purple Gallinules (seen only by entering the reedbed). On 17.2, 7 Little Grebes, 5 Great and 6 Pygmy Cormorants.

#### **Waders**

On 14.1, nothing of note. On 17.2, 95 Lapwings, 2 Green Sandpipers and 2 Common Snipe.

#### **Raptors**

An exceptional area. On 14.1, 8 species including 4 Greater Spotted Eagles and a Pallid Harrier. On 17.2, 3 Greater Spotted Eagles, 6 Marsh Harriers, 2 Long-legged Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk.

#### **Other notable species**

On 14.1, a Black Francolin was flushed from riverside vegetation, Iraqi Babblers and Bearded Tits were common in the reedbed, and a Sardinian Warbler and 10 Spanish Sparrows were seen in the thorn scrub by the river. On 17.2, 9 Penduline Tits, several Cetti's Warblers, 11 Iraq Babblers, 48 Chaffinches and thousands of Rooks were of note.

#### **Conservation Issues**

On 14.1, A-team members heard hunters shooting. There were few houses close to the oxbow. On 17.2, the south-western part of the oxbow was being drained but the south-eastern part still contained some water. Without proper and immediate action, this site could face the same fate as W3: total drainage.

#### **Assessment**

One of the best sites we found in the Euphrates valley, with large areas of good and varied habitat and a wide range of scarce birds; it was particularly good for raptors. An area of thorn scrub near the river was the only example of this habitat that A-team members found. The Shnan oxbow deserves much more intensive study, particularly during the breeding season; it would be a major loss if it were drained.

### **Madan Jadid area (Madan Jadid oxbow W10; Huweijjat N of Madan Jadid oxbow; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

Expedition members appear to have been the first outside ornithologists to visit this site.

#### **Description**

**Co-ordinates: P53 for Madan Jadid, P52 for the Huweijjat; see Map 5.** This is one of the largest oxbows in the Euphrates valley; it lies on the southern side of the Euphrates downstream from ar-Raqqa and close to the large village of Madan Jadid, which actually fronts onto the oxbow. It has similar habitat to the Shnan oxbow, with a long, thin area of open water in the middle and large areas of reeds along the oxbow's arms. The southern arm ended abruptly in a sizeable muddy area.

#### **Coverage**

On 14.1, A-team members spent 2 hours in the middle of the day visiting the oxbow. Weather conditions and visibility were good.

On 16.2, B-team members spent 45 minutes in the morning at the oxbow and 2-3 hours at the huweijjat north of the oxbow. The weather was cold with an easterly wind.

**Assessment of coverage:** a large area superficially covered, partly because of pressures of time, partly because neither team saw many birds at the oxbow; the huweijat was quite productive.

#### **Access to site**

Muddy tracks gave difficult access to the oxbow but A-team members could not find a way down to the river.

B-team members reached most of the area, particularly the huweijat, on foot.

#### **Birds**

##### **Ducks, Herons and Egrets**

None was seen on 14.1, though there appeared to be an abundance of suitable habitat.

On 16.2, a good selection of ducks, with 250 Teal, 620 Gadwall (the highest count of the Expedition), 100 Pochard, 20 Red-crested Pochard, 50 Ferruginous Ducks and 25 Tufted Ducks.

On 19.2, 140 Night Herons seen opposite the Madan Jadid petrol station had been disturbed from a roost.

##### **Other waterbirds**

18 Pygmy Cormorants on 14.1 with 10 on 16.2. 8 Great Black-headed Gulls were also seen in the area.

##### **Waders**

The muddy area at the south-eastern corner of the oxbow held 5 White-tailed Plovers on both 14.1 and 15.2.

##### **Raptors**

Very few on 14.1, a marked contrast from the Shnan area.

##### **Other notable species**

Two separate Black Francolins on 14.1.

##### **Conservation Issues**

There were hunters on 14.1. Madan Jadid, a sizeable village, is on the edge of the oxbow.

#### **Assessment**

A large area of excellent habitat yet with noticeably fewer birds than the Shnan area, at least on these two brief visits; A-team members thought that the likeliest explanation was excessive hunting pressure.

Nevertheless, the large reedbeds would give protection, so this site deserves more thorough investigation, preferably in the early morning.

### **Halabbiyah gorge/riverine woods R11-12/al-Mustah salt fields; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

The IBA Inventory specifically comments on the importance of the Halabbiyah gorge for its wintering duck populations but gives no firm data. For geographical reasons, Halabbiyah is covered together with the riverine woods and al-Mustah salt fields just upstream.

#### **Description**

**Co-ordinates: P54-P58 for the gorge, P59 for al-Mustah salt fields; see Map 5.** The Euphrates valley narrows through a gorge less than 1 km wide, with steep but not vertical sides; the river here runs fast and direct and has little or no marginal vegetation. There are roads on both sides of the river giving excellent access and vantage points. Above the narrows, there are several small, reedy islands with a large area of riverine woodland on the north-eastern side. 13 km upstream from Halabbiyah ruins, there is a wide expanse of arable land with some fields in its centre that are too saline for cultivation, which we named the 'al-Mustah salt fields' after the nearby village.

#### **Coverage**

On 14.1, the A-team spent 1 hour in the gorge, but the weather deteriorated dramatically, with poor visibility preventing a full count of the ducks present. On 15.1, they spent a further hour in the gorge, 2 hours overlooking the woods and 2 hours at the al-Mustah salt fields in the gathering twilight; weather and visibility were good but dusk fell before the salt fields could be thoroughly counted.

On 18.2, the C-team spent an hour viewing the river from the ruins of Zalabbiyah, high above the river (altitude 224m); viewing conditions were good although looking into the sun when facing south was a problem.

The B-team spent the whole of 19.2 in the area on the Halabbiyah side and rapidly scanned the al-Mustah salt fields in the late afternoon; the weather was cloudy with good visibility. **Overall assessment of coverage:** reasonably thorough, as the gorge was viewed from both sides of the river.

#### **Access to site**

On the southern side, there is good access via the road that passes through the fortress of Halabbiyah and on upstream.

On the northern side, Zalabbiyah ruins are easily reached by following the sign on the main road between ar-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. We scanned the woods from the opposite side of the river. The salt fields need a 20-minute tramp through muddy fields to get near them.

#### **Birds**

##### **Duck**

On 15.1, the gorge held over 1000 ducks of 8 species, mainly Pochard, Mallard, Gadwall and Wigeon. On the salt fields, there were 1300 Teal and 32 Shelducks.

On 18.2, numbers were small, but the gorge itself could not be viewed from Zalabbiyah due to a bend in the river.

On 19.2, a good selection of ducks included 150 Gadwall, 500 Teal, 98 Wigeon, 62 Shoveler, 99 Mallard, 2 Red-crested Pochard and 55 Tufted Ducks. The most remarkable observation was of 2 redhead Smew, potentially the first record for Syria (with the second record two days later on the Lower Khabur reservoir).

##### **Other waterbirds**

On 15.1, a large flock of loafing gulls included 120 Armenian Gulls and 8 Great Black-headed Gulls.

On 18.2, there were 8 Cormorants, 8 Pygmy Cormorants and 3830 Coot.

On 19.2, the river held 22 Black-necked Grebes, 9 Pygmy Cormorants, 8700 Coot, 3 Great Black-headed Gulls, an Armenian Gull, 20 Black-headed Gulls and a Common Gull.

##### **Waders**

On 15.1 there were 6 Spur-winged Plovers upstream from the gorge. The salt fields were exceptional, with 15 species including 23 Avocets, 650 Lapwings, 4 Golden Plovers, 2 White-tailed Plovers, 150 Black-tailed Godwits and 18 Eurasian Curlews.

On 19.2, the waders along the Euphrates included 150 Lapwings, a Golden Plover, 26 Redshanks, 15 Spur-winged Plovers and 2 Common Sandpipers. The most interesting observation from a quick scan of the salt fields was 3 Golden Plovers. Many of the waders might roost in the W11 oxbow.

##### **Raptors**

There was a good variety on 15.1, with 1 Greater Spotted Eagle over the woods and 1 over the salt fields. On 19.2, a second-winter Greater Spotted Eagle was seen on an island in the river.

##### **Other notable species**

On 14.1, three huge flocks of Starlings totalling 50000 – 100000 flew downstream in the twilight.

On 18.2, Desert Lark and Finsch's Wheatear were seen near Zalabbiyah ruins.

On 19.2 the Halabbiyah area held 4 Black Francolins, 2 Hoopoes, a Little Owl, 4 Pied Kingfishers, 5 Desert Larks, 2-4 Iraq Babblers, and 2 *maura* Siberian Stonechats. The most remarkable observations were of See-see Partridge. In the morning, there was a pair on the ridge near the Halabbiyah ruins. In the last hour before dusk, the B-team visited a small village nearby and found 5 more See-see Partridge in a broad depression behind the village. The males in this flock had distinctive head patterns, with a white dot on the lores as illustrated in Porter *et al* but unlike those in the Collins guide (Mullarney *et al*).

##### **Conservation Issues**

A-team members were told that local people did not shoot the birds at the salt fields. Aal-A commented that hunting would be very difficult as the area is flat and completely open.

##### **Assessment**

The gorge appears to hold a much greater variety of ducks than most of the river, access is good and birds are easily watched, making it one of the most rewarding stretches of the Euphrates to visit. There is considerable potential for creating protected areas or formal reserves, which could be combined with the remarkable archaeological sites at Halabbiyah and Zalabbiyah. The presence of See-see Partridge is particularly significant.

The salt fields are of outstanding importance for their waders and significant for the duck populations. It is very difficult to make accurate counts as the site is so open; thousands of birds of 20 species flush at the same time at 1 km range. It appears (after only a brief visit) that the site has little agricultural value - this



is presumably why it still exists! We suggest, therefore, that this site should be high on the list of potential reserves for a Syrian-based wildlife organisation. The flock of Eurasian Curlews raises the (perhaps forlorn) hope of finding wintering Slender-billed Curlews.

This area has considerable ecotourist potential; foreign birders should be encouraged to visit.

### **Oxbow W11; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

Expedition members appear to have been the first outside ornithologists to visit this site.

#### **Description**

**Co-ordinates:** P60-P61; see Map 5. This rather small oxbow lies on the southern side of the Euphrates downstream from ar-Raqqa, close to a road and next to a few houses. The habitat consists of large areas of reeds, shallow water and mudflats. A few cows were grazing its banks.

#### **Coverage**

On 16.2, there were good numbers of birds, so B-team members spent 4 hours in the afternoon till dusk. Weather conditions had improved from the morning; it was still cloudy but the wind had dropped and visibility was good.

**Assessment of coverage:** relatively good due to its small size.

#### **Access to site**

The oxbow is relatively close to a road.

#### **Birds**

##### **Ducks, Herons and Egrets**

One Bittern, a single Greater Flamingo (the only Expedition record from the Euphrates valley) and 40 Shelducks. Two Garganeys were probably early migrants.

##### **Other waterbirds**

An evening roost for gulls included 500 Black-headed Gulls, 60 Armenian Gulls, 3 Common Gulls and 11 Great Black-headed Gulls.

##### **Waders**

An evening roost for waders included 1 Marsh Sandpiper, 3 Temminck's Stints, 40 Redshanks, 10 White-tailed Plovers, 131 Black-tailed Godwits and 32 Eurasian Curlews. The number of godwits and curlews increased dramatically shortly before dark.

##### **Raptors**

10 Marsh Harriers

##### **Other notable species**

A party of 10 Iraq Babblers was in the reedbeds. A flock of about 1000 Rooks indicated a nearby roost.

##### **Conservation Issues**

The oxbow is next to houses whose occupants use it to feed their cattle and to deposit rubbish.

##### **Assessment**

The oxbow is a small but excellent piece of habitat with many birds. The waders probably forage along the Euphrates or on the nearby al-Mustah salt fields (see section on Halabbiyah).

### **Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

Expedition members appear to have been the first outside ornithologists to visit this site.

#### **Description**

**Co-ordinate:** P62; see Map 5. A saline oxbow lake upstream from Deir ez-Zor below the Halabbiyah gorge on the north-eastern bank of the Euphrates. There is a thin fringe of reeds on one side, a shallow, muddy shoreline and a heavily grazed flat area stretching to the road almost 1 km away.

### Coverage

The A-team spent 1 hour here on 15.1, long enough to check both ends. Weather conditions and visibility were good. **Assessment of coverage:** adequate to evaluate the site.

### Access to site

Easily accessed from the road.

### Birds

On 15.1, the only noteworthy group was the waders, of which there were 60 individuals of 7 species.

### Conservation Issues

None noted. A very open site, making hunting extremely difficult.

### Assessment

This site might be very interesting for waders during migration if it does not become too dry.

## Mheimideh oxbow W18; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)

An easily accessible site close to Deir ez-Zor that has been visited sporadically by foreign birders for at least 10 years, Mheimideh has turned up many outstanding records, notably White-headed, Marbled and Ferruginous Ducks and good numbers of White-tailed Plovers. It is a good site for Purple Gallinule, Citrine Wagtail and Iraq Babbler.

### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P63-P64; see Maps 5 and 6. A small oxbow on the north-eastern side of the Euphrates about 15 km north-west of Deir ez-Zor, measuring about 1x1 km. Altitude 205 m. Mheimideh is extraordinary, not only for the diversity of birds but also because it is effectively in a village; it is completely surrounded by houses, even in the centre of the oxbow. A main road runs along the western edge of the site. Another road runs close to its northern side but a 5 m belt of *Arundo* reeds acts as an effective screen from the deep water of the oxbow. The ground in the centre of the oxbow is very broken up by past mining operations, which have left many small depressions filled with water that make access to the areas of deeper water difficult; this area is very heavily grazed. The land shelves irregularly and slowly into the deeper water, with patches of reed of various sizes and other emergent vegetation. The result is a rich mosaic of habitats in a relatively small area.

### Coverage

The A-team spent 3 hours in the early morning of 15.1, covering the site thoroughly and penetrating well into the thicker vegetation. Weather conditions and visibility were good.

The B-team spent 4-5 hours here on 17.2, finding the reed beds difficult to access. The weather and visibility were excellent.

The C-team spent 4.5 hours on the morning of 19.2, crossing the site on foot and obtaining excellent views of the northern lagoon by standing on a truck (P64); the western (deeper) waters were viewed from the road on the west side and the area was circled by car. Weather conditions and visibility were excellent. **Assessment of coverage:** thorough

### Access to site

Mheimideh is easy to visit as the main road along the N side of the Euphrates runs past it. Access is open, except for a small section lined by houses on the north-eastern side. Waterproof footwear is useful.

### Birds

#### Ducks

On 15.1, 12 species of ducks included 700 Teal, 50 Pintail, 800 Pochard, 45 Ferruginous Ducks and 21 White-headed Ducks.

On 17.2, 5 White-headed Ducks and about 40 Ferruginous Ducks.

On 19.2, a single Greylag Goose and 11 species of ducks, notably 4 Shelducks, 62 Pintail, 114 Shoveler, 4 Marbled Teal, 249 Teal, 17 Ferruginous Ducks and 5 White-headed Ducks. Many of the ducks (both in species and numbers) were found on the northern lagoon.

#### Hérons and Egrets

On 15.1, a roost of 45 Grey Herons; on 17.2, 2 Bitterns; and on 19.2, 5 species including 5 Bitterns and 1 Little Bittern.

### Other waterbirds

Excellent for Purple Gallinules; 5 were recorded on 15.1, 6 on 17.2 and 3 on 19.2. Also good for Water Rails

### Waders

On 15.1, 8 species including 13 Spur-winged Plovers, 45 Ruffs and 2 Black-tailed Godwits.

On 17.2, 8 species including 8 Spur-winged Plovers, 8 White-tailed Plovers and 20 Ruffs.

On 19.2, 9 species including 2 Black-winged Stilts, 4 Spur-winged Plovers, about 40 White-tailed Plovers, mostly paired off, and 1 Black-tailed Godwit.

On 17.2, the salt fields 4 km to the south-east held 14 White-tailed Plovers, 10 Kentish Plovers, 15 Ringed Plovers, 11 Dunlins, 25 Little Stints, 15 Temminck's Stints and 15 Redshanks.

### Raptors

On 15.1, 7 species including Black Kite, Long-legged and Common Buzzards and Merlin.

On 19.2, 5 species including Black Kite and 3 Long-legged Buzzards (1 dark phase).

### Other notable species

On 15.1, Iraq Babblers were common and confiding, with 3 flocks including singing males.

Pied Kingfishers were notably common, with 30 on 15.1 and 50 on 19.2. One Citrine Wagtail and a flock of 10 Desert Finches were seen on 15.1 and 3 Citrine Wagtails, several Bluethroats (including a male *svevica*) and Moustached Warblers on 19.2.

On 17.2, there was one Great Spotted Cuckoo, 2 Reed Warblers (probably of the form *fuscus*) in the reedbeds, a Redwing and an Isabelline Shrike showing characteristics of Chinese Shrike *L. (isabellinus) arenarius* on a telegraph wire.

### Conservation Issues

A-team members found used cartridges but no hunting was taking place during their visit. Many of the ducks were wary, but our impression was that any sustained harassment (as noted at Lake of Homs) would effectively deter them from using the site. Observations from June 2003 included White-tailed Plover breeding within 20 m of the road, which is incompatible with significant persecution. It is likely, therefore, that there is some measure of protection from the surrounding village, but we do not know whether it is explicit or because the wetland is surrounded by houses, thereby making hunting dangerous. C-team members saw a boy walking around with a live (apparently snared) male Teal. Some villagers told Expedition members that they wanted the site drained, but others reported that they discouraged children from persecuting birds. The site is heavily grazed by cattle and sheep but it appears to have undergone little change since the first known visit by a foreign birder, RH, 10 years ago.

### Assessment

Mheimideh is exceptional. It has good numbers and a wide variety of wintering ducks and waders; resident Iraq Babblers, Spur-winged Plover and Purple Gallinule; and an astonishing range of breeding species including White-headed, Marbled and Ferruginous Duck (all Red Data Book species) and good numbers of White-tailed Plover, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater and Whiskered Tern. Its accessibility makes it even more valuable – the Agricultural University at Deir ez-Zor is within 15 minutes' drive.

Mheimideh could be the flagship reserve in the Euphrates valley for a Syrian conservation society, with outstanding potential for biological research, educating Syrians in nature conservation and ecotourism.

## Oxbow W20; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)

### Description

**Co-ordinate:** P66; see Map 7. A dry, barren area with few remaining reeds.

### Coverage

The B-team spent about an hour here on 17.2. **Assessment of coverage:** Relatively good in sunny conditions

### Access to site

Mostly easy; the main road runs along it and tracks lead into the area.

## **Birds**

Five Little Egrets, 15 Redshanks, a single Greenshank and three Pied Kingfishers were the best birds.

## **Assessment/Conservation Issues**

Although the winter was relatively wet, the site was completely dry and must be at risk of drainage. At present, it has little ornithological value, but if the water levels were restored, it could be a valuable site. Hunting is possible as there is a village nearby

## **River Euphrates at Deir ez-Zor; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

An excellent area on the edge of the biggest city on the Syrian Euphrates. The habitat is unusually lush for the valley and holds breeding Iraq Babbler, White-cheeked Bulbul and Yellow-throated Sparrow.

## **Description**

**Co-ordinate: P67; see Map 7.** At Deir ez-Zor, the Euphrates breaks up into several channels, with islands fringed by reeds and bank-side trees, and orchards along the river. Opposite the city, the extensive grounds of the Agricultural University have many small fields lined by thick conifers up to 15 m tall, which are secluded and probably protected from hunters. There is therefore more varied habitat and much more cover than along most of the river.

## **Coverage**

The A-team spent an hour in the area round the footbridge in the early morning of 17.1; there was thick mist, it was cold and visibility was poor. The B-team twice spent an hour here in the early mornings of 17.2 and 20.2.

The C-team spent the night of 21.2 in the Hotel al-Saeed but made no formal visit to the area.

**Assessment of coverage:** superficial coverage in poor weather by the A-team; relatively good coverage by the B-team; incidental records only from the C-team.

## **Access to site**

This is easy. A road runs along the south (city) side of the river and there are others through the Agricultural University and north from the footbridge. However, the grounds of the University do not appear to be open to visitors. There are fine views along the river from the footbridge. A short footpath runs upstream from the footbridge on the north-eastern side.

## **Birds**

On 16.1, very few birds were moving in the unpleasant weather; a party of Iraq Babblers performed well and a Siskin flew over.

On 17.2, a group of 15 Iraq Babblers were seen, one Ring-necked Parakeet flew over, a Black Francolin was flushed and two Redwings were in the playground along the river.

A roost of 92 Night Herons was counted on an island on 17.2 and 20.2. On 19.2, a Greater Spotted Eagle flew low over the road in front of the University; when they got out of the car, C-team members were instructed to leave as there is apparently a military building opposite the University building. On the morning of 22.2, a short stroll through the palm garden bordering Hotel al-Saeed revealed 7 White-cheeked Buleuls (heard from within the hotel room), 7 Song Thrushes, 70 Spanish Sparrows and 2 Dead Sea Sparrows.

## **Conservation Issues**

Hunting is very unlikely; large numbers of people use the footbridge and the grounds of the University are closed.

## **Assessment**

This is an extremely important area for several reasons. Firstly, the lush vegetation along the river and the protected 'forest' of the University grounds make it ornithologically very interesting. Secondly, the footbridge could be an excellent spot at which to carry out formal counts of raptors and other diurnal migrants. Finally, there are good opportunities to interest and educate Syrians about wildlife in a famous beauty spot.

## Oxbow W27a + W27b; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)

### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P68 for W27a, P69 for W27b; see Map 7. Oxbow W27a was a dry oxbow with reedbeds but little water. On the other side of the main road, oxbow W27b looked barren and deserted.

### Coverage

The B-team spent about 90 minutes in the area on 18.2.

### Assessment of coverage

Oxbow W27a was relatively well covered in sunny conditions. Oxbow 27b was not visited.

### Access to site

The site is close to the main road; an unpaved road leads into the fields.

### Birds

The few water birds included single Great White Egret and Grey Heron; no ducks; and three species of wader including two Green Sandpipers. There were 4 species of raptor including 20 Black Kites and a Merlin, and twenty Iraq Babblers in the dry reedbeds.

### Assessment/Conservation Issues

Although the winter was relatively wet, the site was completely dry. At present, it has limited ornithological value, but if the water levels were restored, it could become a valuable site. There is no village in the immediate area.

## al-Ashara oxbow (W28); part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)

Previous publications on Syria's avifauna (Evans 1994; Hofland 1994) mention a pool at Mayadin or al-Ashara but they probably do not refer to this oxbow.

### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P70-P72; see Map 7. The site is not visible from the main road but was easily located by the C-team using the satellite map provided by IA; it is just south of al-Ashara village and about 7 km south of Mayadin on the south-west bank of the Euphrates.

The oxbow is moderately large, measuring about 2 km west to east, and lies at altitude 182 m, with two lagoons about 300 m apart connected by wet grassland. The northern lagoon is about 50 m wide and contains more water than the southern one, which is about 20 m wide. Both lagoons are fringed by reedbeds 3 m wide of a species generally taller than the European species (5 m high instead of 2 m); open areas in the reeds give access to and views over the open water. The northern lagoon is more accessible; both dry and wet grassland border the reedbeds and provide habitat for dry grassland species such as stonechats and shrikes. As in most Syrian oxbows, the western (non-connected) ends of the lagoons peter out into extensive and apparently pure tracts of reeds.

### Coverage

The B-team spent 2 hours in the late morning of 18.2. The weather was good and visibility excellent. The C-team viewed both lagoons on 20.2, taking 4 hours to count and assess the site. Weather conditions and visibility: good, sunny. **Assessment of coverage:** thorough.

### Access to site

Access is straightforward with an adequate map. A road leads to a village on the north-eastern side of the oxbow; from here, it is a 1.5 km walk to a spot from which most of the open water of the northern lagoon can be viewed. The northern side of the oxbow is bordered by slightly raised agricultural land, so that it is easy to see over the tall reeds. The southern lagoon is easily reached by following a track.

### Birds

Few ducks, with 48 Teal on 20.2. Good numbers of Little Grebes and 4 species of herons/egrets on both visits, with single Bittern and Purple Gallinule on both dates and 20 Grey Herons on 20.2. On 20.2, an obliging first-winter female Little Crake showed itself unconcerningly out in the open for over half an hour. Few raptors or waders, the best being 2 Spur-winged Plovers, 19 Common Snipe and 1 Jack Snipe on 20.2.

### Other notable species

On 18.2, 3 Isabelline Shrikes showing characteristics of Chinese Shrike *L. (isabellinus) arenarius* and a single *variegata* Siberian Stonechat were seen as well as one Reed Warbler and 10 Iraq Babblers. On 20.2, a Clamorous Reed Warbler was seen well; this is probably the first record for Syria away from the Jordan valley. Both Eurasian Reed Warbler and Moustached Warbler were also recorded. Several *dukhunensis*-type White Wagtails, single male *maura* and *variegata* Siberian Stonechats, 3 *arenarius*-type Isabelline Shrikes and 1 probable Turkestan Shrike made this an interesting area.

### Conservation Issues

Whether the low water level of the connecting eastern side of both lagoons had something to do with drainage could not be established. No cartridges were found and no shots were heard. The low numbers of ducks and other waterbirds probably make this site less interesting for hunters.

### Assessment

A site visit in the breeding season is recommended as it could hold breeding Purple Gallinules and possibly Ferruginous and White-headed Ducks. Extensive reedbeds can conceal small patches of open water that cannot be properly censused without aerial views. Such small patches of open water can hold good numbers of reedbed specialties such as Pygmy Cormorant and Ferruginous Duck, and can also provide shelter from hunters. However, making this site into a reserve would not have high priority; it is far from the main cities and it is too small to be of major significance.

## Huweijat al-Jurdi; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)

Expedition members appear to have been the first outside ornithologists to visit this site.

### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P73, P74. A large wood in a bend of the southern bank of the Euphrates 67 km downstream from Deir ez-Zor.

### Coverage

The A-team spent about an hour at midday on 16.1 on the opposite bank overlooking the wood. Weather conditions and visibility were good. **Assessment of coverage:** very superficial.

### Access to site

We were able to drive down a good road on the northern bank to the river; we did not visit the southern side.

### Birds

On 16.1, there were small numbers of waterfowl along the river's edge, notably 16 Little Egrets and a male Little Bittern, but very few ducks. A Greater Spotted Eagle was hunting over the wood. We saw loose flocks of about 40 Grey Herons and 40 Black Kites in the distance.

### Conservation Issues

We were told that the Government had banned logging in the wood.

### Assessment

A relatively inaccessible area of extremely promising habitat that needs to be thoroughly investigated; we saw several interesting species in a brief visit. Many such areas of riverine woodland may still exist along the Euphrates, in which case they constitute one of the most natural and important wildlife habitats left in Syria.

## Doura Europos; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)

A prime archeological site with a range of interesting birds

### Description

**Co-ordinate:** P75. Doura Europos is an outstanding archaeological site with massive walls and a fine castle on a cliff overlooking the river. Beneath there are islets with small trees and reedbeds.

### Coverage

The B-team spent 4 hours in the afternoon till dusk on 18.2. When they found hundreds of pellets, presumably belonging to a (Desert) Eagle Owl, in a cliff-top tower, they decided to stay till dusk to try to see the bird. The only owl they found was a Barn Owl, clearly unsettled by something else - possibly the Eagle Owl. Darkness forced retreat. The weather was pleasant and sunny.

**Assessment of coverage:** The site has been relatively well covered.

### Access to site

Access is straightforward and well signposted from the main road. The guard asks for a small entrance fee.

### Birds

The best birds along the Euphrates were 50 Pygmy Cormorants, a single Ferruginous Duck with small numbers of Teal and Pochard, 3 Great Black-headed Gulls and at least 5 Iraq Babbler in the reeds. Raptors included a soaring adult Greater Spotted Eagle and 2 Long-legged Buzzards. The ruins were good for Finsch's Wheatears and Little Owls of the race *lilith*, with a male Blue Rock Thrush on the wall and 50 'pure' Rock Doves in the cliff-face. A Barn Owl and pellets belonging to (Desert?) Eagle Owl were found in the castle.

### Conservation Issues

The site is an important archeological location. In 2004 the area was empty of tourists because of the tense international situation; large numbers of tourists might (but not necessarily) cause problems. Insensitive restoration could damage owls' nesting sites. The cliffs used to hold a summer colony of Lesser Kestrels; it is unclear whether they are still present.

### Assessment

Although not a typical ornithological site, Doura Europos holds several good species; it is a wonderful place to combine Syria's cultural and ornithological riches.

## Abu Hammam (Gharanij) wetlands W30-32, including Abu Hammam oxbow W30; part of Euphrates valley (IBA 010)

It is likely that this area once flooded regularly. Dams upstream now regulate the Euphrates' water levels and the floodplain has been drained. Expedition members appear to have been the first outside ornithologists to visit this site. 'Gharanij' is apparently a local name for flamingo.

### Description

**Co-ordinates:** P76-P78 and P112; see Maps 7 and 8. Oxbow W30 is close to the village of Abu Hammam. The Gharanij area (W31-32) is a large, very flat floodplain with salt-pans, low-density agriculture, patches of reeds and other wetland vegetation; there are scattered houses. Median altitude 180 m.

### Coverage

On 16.1, A-team members spent 2 hours in the afternoon at W31-32 but probably only visited half the site. It was a cool, overcast day with a light south-easterly wind; visibility was good.

The C-team visited oxbow W30 and the saline flats and oxbows of W31/32 for 3 hours on the afternoon of 20.2.

Weather conditions and visibility were good.

**Assessment of coverage:** rapid and incomplete by the A-team; thorough by the C-team

### Access to site

Several roads cross the area; there appears to be open access with no physical barriers to entrance.

### Birds

On 16.1, there were few birds, but they included 14 Kentish Plovers, single Black-winged Stilt and Quail, and a male Turkestan Shrike - the only January records of all four species.

On 20.2, waterbirds at oxbow W30 included 72 Pochard, 18 Ferruginous Ducks and 564 Coot. Other notable records include single *maura* and 2 *variegata* Siberian Stonechats, 2 Moustached Warblers and 2 Iraq Babbler. W31 held small numbers of 12 species of wader, probably starting to migrate, and a dead Long-eared Owl, but there were few other waterbirds.



### **Conservation Issues**

Members of the A-team saw hunters in action on 16.1. The population density along the nearby main road was very high and many people were using the area; building work is likely to increase as the farming opportunities are limited.

### **Assessment**

Its Arabic name reveals its past glories but any flamingos that visited the area now would probably be shot. Abu Hammam oxbow W30 is still a good area of habitat with significant numbers of duck. At present W31 is not important for waterbirds but it could be significant for migrating waders.

## **Buhayrat al-Laha (IBA 016)**

A coastal site just north of the Lebanese border, included in the IBA Inventory because it was proposed as an ornithological or nature conservation reserve by a Task Force of the UNEP Regional Activity Centre for Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas (Jeudy de Grissac 1989). The IBA Inventory states that 'the site is said to be very important for migratory birds of unspecified type, presumably waterfowl', but there appear to be no data to support this claim.

### **Description**

**Co-ordinate: P86.** The description in the IBA Inventory of a natural coastal wetland with few settlements no longer applies; a brief visit by the A-team on 8.1 found a large village on the major coast road close to the Lebanese border. Inland from the road there was intensive agriculture with large numbers of 'polytunnels' and a series of well-drained fields with some reedy dykes; we found almost no habitat still suitable for waterfowl. The shore was covered with litter.

### **Coverage**

On 8.1, the A-team drove down the coast road for 10 km as far as the Lebanese border, spending 1-2 hours in the area. They walked briefly along the beach and scanned inland but for obvious reasons they could not thoroughly check the small tidal area on the Lebanese border. Weather conditions and visibility were good.

**Assessment of coverage:** adequate to assess the area's potential.

### **Access to site**

The coast road affords excellent access, though it would be very unwise to go near the Lebanese border with optical equipment!

### **Birds**

A single Jack Snipe was the only bird of note.

### **Conservation Issues**

Population density is high, agriculture is intensive and there is easy access along the major road into Lebanon, for hunters as well as for Expedition members.

### **Assessment**

It appears that ornithologists had never visited the area before; this presumably explains why the site was included in the IBA Inventory. It is now of very little wildlife value and should be removed from the Inventory.

## **Lake of Homs (IBA 017)**

Visits in the 1970s by MacFarlane (MacFarlane 1978) and a census in January 1993 demonstrated the importance of this site for waterfowl, which is included in the IBA Inventory.

### **Description**

**Co-ordinates: P87-P99; see Map 9.** Accurately summarised in the IBA Inventory.

### **Coverage**

The A-team spent 6-8 hours on 7.1 and 2 hours on 8.1 visiting many points along the shore, but appalling weather conditions from mid-morning on 7.1 coupled with very poor visibility rendered counts of the western and southern shores meaningless.



The B-team spent half of 8.2 and a full day on 9.2 in pleasant, sunny conditions, paying most attention to the western side of the lake, the area that probably held the highest concentration of birds.

### **Access to site**

There are many good access points on the shoreline that can be reached by saloon car, though the maze of unmapped roads often makes it extremely difficult to find them. We include a map of the site generated using GPS data.

### **Birds**

#### **Duck**

There was a mass of ducks at the eastern end early on 7.1, notably 4000 Shoveler, 250 Tufted Ducks and 7 White-headed Ducks. Constant disturbance made it difficult to count waterfowl on the western part of the lake, but there was a minimum of 3500 Pochard.

On 8.2, there was a flock of 5000 Pochard and on 9.2, 11 White-headed Ducks and a flock of 250 Pintail (the largest recorded during the Expedition). On 9.2, a total of 25000-30000 waterfowl was estimated from the viewpoint on the northern shore, mostly Teal, Wigeon, Coot and Pochard, with smaller numbers of Mallard, Shoveler, Pintail and Tufted Ducks, 200 Black-necked Grebes and 200 Great Crested Grebes.

#### **Hérons and Egrets**

210 Little Egrets seen flying out at dawn on 7.1 were clearly leaving a roost at the eastern end of the lake. Small numbers of Cattle Egrets, totalling 20-30, were seen at three places round its perimeter.

On 8.2-9.2, there were tens of Little Egrets, Great White Egrets and Grey Herons.

#### **Other waterbirds**

On 7.1, a minimum of 200 Whiskered Terns and 5 Little Gulls were being watched off the southern shore when the weather front arrived. Wing feathers from a long-dead White Pelican were found on the western side. On 8.2-9.2, there were over 200 Great Crested Grebes, over 200 Black-necked Grebes, more than 3000 Black-headed Gulls, 2 adult Great Black-headed Gulls, and on the western side of the lake, 600-1000 Whiskered Terns.

#### **Waders**

On 7.1-8.1, one Eurasian Curlew at Moudan, about 50 Dunlins and 50 Little Stints on the southern shore and several Lapwing flocks totalling 50-100.

On 9.2, a flock of about 2000 Lapwings contained a Sociable Plover. Other waders included 20 Little Stints, 20 Dunlins, 2 Green Sandpipers, 50 Redshanks, 20 Little Ringed Plovers and 9 Eurasian Curlews.

#### **Raptors**

On 7.1, 2 Long-legged Buzzards and 8 Marsh Harriers

On 8.2-9.2, 5 species including Long-legged Buzzard and Merlin

#### **Conservation Issues**

The area surrounding Lake of Homs is densely populated and intensively farmed. There is probably substantial agricultural run-off, massive hunting pressure with continuous disturbance of the flocks of waterfowl, significant fishing activity, much litter along the shore, particularly at the south-western corner, and a huge phosphates factory at the eastern end. Yet Lake of Homs still holds important numbers of wintering waterbirds including two Red Data Book species.

There are several islands well out in the lake, one fringed by low bushes; if they were undisturbed, they could hold significant breeding colonies of herons, ducks and terns.

B-team members noted unidentified freshwater turtles along a stream on the north-western shore near a chicken farm (P91) and Common Jackals in the fields nearby.

#### **Assessment**

The site still holds important numbers of ducks in spite of the constant threat from hunters. However, the numbers of White-headed Ducks appear to have fallen dramatically from the 1970s and the impression gained is that this level of hunting is unsustainable. There are still large numbers of Little Egrets and it appears to be the best site for Cattle Egret in Syria.

A boat would be useful to reveal the relative abundance of individual species. A breeding season census is fully justified, particularly if a boat were available to visit the islands.

## **Sed Wadi Abied (part of IBA 018; Tadmur and Sabkhat Muh)**

The importance of this man-made wetland lies not in its size but its position; it is located in the badia (steppes) about 10 km north-west of Palmyra, where it provides a welcome place for migrating birds to find food and water. There are other reservoirs in the badia but the considerable size of Sed Wadi Abied is likely to keep it in better condition throughout the year. One member of the Expedition, GS, has lived in Palmyra for the past 3 years and has gathered extensive data on its birds (Serra *et al* 2005a, 2005b.). The site is not specifically included in the IBA Inventory but would form part of IBA 018.

### **Description**

**Co-ordinate: P100.** The Sed is about 1 km across with the dam and a road on two sides. The side furthest from the dam has a broad band of reeds running for at least 1 km; the back of the reedbed can be reached with a saloon car but it is very difficult to get into the reeds themselves.

### **Coverage**

The site was visited for less than 1 hour on the evening of 6.1; weather conditions and visibility were initially good but the light did not last long enough. On 26.2, it was visited for 45 minutes and all waterbirds present were counted.

**Assessment of coverage:** brief and incomplete in January, adequate in February.

### **Access to site**

Access is easy on all sides; it is possible to drive a saloon car round the back of the reedbed.

### **Birds**

On 26.2, 5 Ferruginous Ducks and 2 Tufted Ducks were both first records for this site (and were initially located by MA); 8 Shoveler, 3 Wigeon, 21 Teal and 70 Pochard, 6 Black-necked Grebes and 331 Coots were also present.

On 6.1, several Merlins and Hen Harriers were hunting in the dusk and thousands of Linnets were roosting in the reeds.

### **Conservation Issues**

Hunting takes place as we found discarded cartridges. The reeds provide an effective barrier to the back of the lake, giving a measure of protection to the birds on the open water. However, six Whooper Swans wintered from December 2001 until February 2002, when one was shot by a hunter (Serra *et al* 2005). We saw no evidence of fishing.

### **Assessment**

The Sed is unimportant for its wintering birds but is likely to be a valuable stopover site for migrants crossing the Badia and adds significantly to the rich wildlife of the surrounding area of Badia. The first Syrian breeding record of Bearded Tit was from this site (Tavares *et al* 2000)!

## **Lower Khabur reservoir, SE of al-Hasakah**

The site has probably never been visited by ornithologists; it is not included in the IBA Inventory.

### **Description**

**Co-ordinates: P101-103; see Map 10.** A large reservoir about 20 km long (north to south), and estimated to vary in width between 5 and 8 km; it was formed by damming the River Khabur halfway between the cities of al-Hasakah and as-Shadade. Further south, the River Khabur peters out to form a filthy stream 2 m wide. Several villages were submerged when the reservoir was filled; ruined houses now act as perches for Cormorants. Median altitude 295 m.

### **Coverage**

The C-team censused the eastern side of the reservoir between 08:00 and 11:30 on 21.2. Weather conditions: cloudy, strong south-easterly wind, cold. Visibility adequate.

**Assessment of coverage:** a thorough count was made of the eastern side of reservoir. The western side was not visited.

### **Access to site**

This is straightforward for the eastern side. From the main highway, turn right (east) at as-Shadade, then take the first turn left (north). After about 20 km the dam becomes visible, as well as the road up the reservoir's eastern side.

Access to the western side has not been investigated.

### **Birds**

#### **Geese and ducks**

2,307 White-fronted Geese were found on the meadows bordering the south-eastern part of the reservoir with 9 Ruddy Shelduck on the meadows along the road. Ducks included a flock of 14 Smew (probably the second record for Syria), 137 Mallard, two Gadwall, 13 Pintail, 18 Wigeon, 520 Teal, 660 Pochard and 98 Red-crested Pochard.

#### **Hérons and Egrets**

Small numbers of Little Egrets, Great White Egrets and Grey Herons.

#### **Other waterbirds**

19 Little Grebes, 10 Black-necked Grebes, 26 Great Crested Grebes and 545 Coots. A small gull roost held 58 Black-headed Gulls.

#### **Waders**

A lone Eurasian Curlew was found on the gently sloping dry grasslands bordering the south-eastern part of the reservoir. There were small numbers of 4 species of wader.

#### **Raptors**

Single Marsh and Hen Harriers as well as Merlin were noted.

#### **Conservation Issues**

There are only tiny villages on the eastern side but hunting and fishing probably occur. The level of disturbance is unknown, but if it is limited, Cormorants could use the ruined houses in the lake as breeding sites. The conservation value of the western side is not known, but there is likely to be more disturbance as the main Deir ez-Zor – al-Hasakah highway runs right past it and there might be more human habitation.

#### **Assessment**

This reservoir should be included in any future Syrian waterfowl census, because of its size and because the western side has not yet been censused. A thorough search of the grasslands bordering the south-eastern section is recommended; this habitat can be good for rare species such as Sociable Plover. RB and RH have both seen Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* in similar habitat at Merja Zerga, Morocco, in the early 1990s.

## **Upper Khabur reservoir, NW of al-Hasakah**

The site is not included in the IBA Inventory and is unlikely to have been visited by ornithologists before.

#### **Description**

**Co-ordinate:** P104; see Map 10. A small reservoir about 800 m x 800 m in a rocky area just south of the village of Darbahsiyah and about 20 km north-west of the city of al-Hasakah. There is some open forest with small pines nearby. Altitude 348 m.

#### **Coverage**

The C-team only spent 45 minutes here, but this was enough to make a comprehensive waterbird count. Weather conditions: cloudy and cold with a strong south-easterly wind; visibility adequate.

**Assessment of coverage:** adequate; almost all the open water could be viewed.

#### **Access to site**

The site is not easy to find. Access is via the main road from al-Hasakah to Ceylanpinar (in Turkey), with a right turn north after passing several chicken farms (odd white buildings) on the right.

**Birds**

On 21.2, 331 Shoveler and 170 Pochard were the only ducks of note; there were small numbers of both egrets and Grey Herons. Counts of 243 Little Grebes and 67 Black-necked Grebes were significant; 907 Coot were also present. A gull roost held small numbers of Caspian and Armenian Gulls as well as single Black-headed, Slender-billed and Great Black-headed Gulls. The 29 Lapwings present were closely scrutinised for Sociable Plover but none was found.

**Conservation Issues**

No threats of any kind were noted.

**Assessment**

This reservoir clearly acts as a roost and/or feeding site for a small number of species, some of which occur in relatively high numbers. Hunting probably occurs, as it does in most of Syria. This site should be checked again for Sociable Plover, as three were seen nearby among a Lapwing flock and the B-team found one among Lapwings in a similar site further west at Lake of Homs.

## Results, Section 3 – Bird species list

This is a systematic list of all bird species recorded during the expedition. Any assessment of status is conservative and refers explicitly to the winter status alone. We hope that there will soon be a firm record base for all times of year, making it possible to assess species status more completely.

### **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

A-team: 12 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 24 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 54 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 400 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 4 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 92 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 8 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 10 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 40 Mheimideh (15.1); 2 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 15 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 200 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 50 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 1 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 2 Euphrates near Madan Jadid (16.2); 20 Mheimideh (17.2); 30 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 5 Halabbiyah (19.2); 10 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 17 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 10 Euphrates 10 km W of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 7 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 ar-Raqqa (17.2); 9 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 26 oxbow W13 (18.2); 7 Euphrates P82 (18.2); 31 Mheimideh (19.2); 22 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 P112 (20.2); 30 Abu Hammam area W30-32 (20.2); 19 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 243 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied, Palmyra (26.2); 1 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: common and widespread in winter

### **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

A-team: 2 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 8 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 255 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 115 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 625 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 240 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 410 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 110 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1); 14 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: >200 Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 25 Jabbul village (10.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 3 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 5 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 200 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 5 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 20 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 500 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 25 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 22 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 10 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 67 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 6 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2)

Assessment of status: common and widespread in winter, particularly on the major water bodies (Lake of Homs, Lake Tishreen, Ba'ath Lake and Lake Assad)

Comment: Lake Assad could well hold internationally important numbers

### **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

A-team: 4 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 22 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 3 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 70 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 90 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 30 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 2 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1)

B-team: >200 Lake of Homs northern shore (9.2); 200 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 105 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 50 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 50 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 50 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 20 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 100 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 90 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 20 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2)

C-team: 1 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 3 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 26 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 26 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: winter visitor to large water bodies, usually in small numbers; commonest at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

### **Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

A-team: 12 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 1 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 165 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 1350 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 250 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 153 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 50 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 22 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 30 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 8 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 5, Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 40 Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1)

B-team: 70 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 80 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 89 Jabbul, Abu Dreicha (10.2); 150 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 200 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 10 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 200 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 225 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 20 Euphrates near oxbow W10 (16.2); 25 Doura Europos (18.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 234 on lake and 243 flying north towards roost at dusk, Lake Tishreen (15.2); 312 flying north during roost count, Lake Tishreen, northern end (16.2); 5 Euphrates 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 5 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 6 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 8 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 3 Euphrates **P111** (20.2); 223 Lower Khabor reservoir (21.2); 7 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: winter visitor in relatively small numbers, mainly on the reservoirs

**Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

A-team: 240 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 53 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 2 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 43 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 83 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1); 40 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 18 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 7 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 9 Euphrates at Huweijjat al-Jurdi (16.1); 1 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 300 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 10 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P20** (13.2); 5 Lake Assad **P28** (14.2); 11 Ba'ath Lake **P33** (15.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); >20 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 5 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 10 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 50 Doura Europos (18.2); 5 Euphrates **P54** (19.2); 2 Halabbiyah (19.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 416 Jerablus new bridge, flying north (evening roost count, 15.2); 1374, Jerablus new bridge, flying south to Lake Tishreen (morning roost count, 16.2); 82 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 21 over Euphrates 10 km west of ar-Raqqa; 17 oxbow W1; 6 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 178 flying south towards roost, north of new bridge at ar-Raqqa (17.2); 32 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 3 oxbow W13 (18.2); 2 Euphrates **P82** (18.2); 8 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 47 flying north-west towards roost, Euphrates **P84** (18.2); 1 Mheimideh (19.2); 22 oxbow W23 (19.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter throughout the Euphrates valley wherever suitable habitat is present, but particularly common in the oxbow reedbeds along the river; not recorded from Lake of Homs or Sabkhat al-Jabbul

Comments: classified by Birdlife International (Birdlife International 2000) as Near Threatened, with an estimated world population of about 25000 pairs. The wintering population at Lake Tishreen is probably of international significance. Considered by Baumgart *et al* (1995) to be 'a rare visitor'

**White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

A-team: feathers from a long-dead individual, probably an adult, Lake of Homs, western side (7.1)

B-team: 12, Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 2 Jabbul SE Lake **P4** (11.2)

C-team: 9 (including 2 first-winters) Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: winter visitor to Jabbul; not recorded elsewhere

**Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus*

C-team: 1 adult Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: possibly a rare winter visitor

**Unidentified Pelican** *Pelecanus* sp

B-team: 8 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2)

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

A-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (10.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1); 3 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 2 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 1-2 Jabbul Dyke **P12** (10.2); 1 oxbow W11 (16.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (15.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 5 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter

**Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*

A-team: 1 male, Euphrates at Huweijjat al-Jurdi (16.1)

C-team: 1 male, Mheimideh (19.2)

Assessment of status: apparently rare in winter

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

A-team: 120 at roost, Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (10.1); 7 flying over, Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1); 1 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 26 flying over, Lake Assad, western shore (dusk, 12.1); 4 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 1 Euphrates, W22 – Huweijjat al-Jurdi (16.1); 9 flying over, Euphrates at Huweijjat al-Jurdi (16.1)

B-team: 92 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 140 Madan Jadid (19.2); 91 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (20.2)



C-team: 148 at roost, Jerablus new bridge (15.2); 190 same roost, Jerablus new bridge (16.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter

Comment: two sizeable roosts were found, suggesting that this species is probably fairly common in winter

#### **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*

A-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (10.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke **P12** (10.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

#### **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*

A-team: all records from Lake of Homs: 10 southern side (7.1); 8 Moudan (7.1); 9 northern shore (8.1)

B-team: 5 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 20 Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 3 Jabbul village (10.2)

Assessment of status: fairly common at Lake of Homs, scarce at Jabbul, not recorded from the Euphrates valley

#### **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

A-team: 237 (including 210 leaving roost at dawn), Lake of Homs (7.1); Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 57 Lake Tishreen (9.1, 10.1); 10 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 36 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 9 Mheimideh (15.1); 3 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 2 oxbow W22 (16.1); 17 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 1 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 3 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 5 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 10 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 20 Lake of Homs, north-western; corner, chicken farm **P91** (9.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 20 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 2 Lake Tishreen, northern end **P16** (13.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 3 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); 6 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 5 W20 oxbow (17.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2); 4 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 8 Doura Europos (18.2)

C-team: 6 at site counts with 39 at roost, Lake Tishreen (15.2); 14 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 3 10 km north-west of ar-Raqqa; 1 ar-Raqqa (17.2); 9 oxbow W13 (18.2); 10 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 oxbow W23 (19.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 14 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 5 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 25 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter but usually in relatively low numbers

#### **Great (White) Egret** *Casmerodius albus*

A-team: 5 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 4 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 5 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 60 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 120 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 4 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 6 Mheimideh (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 4 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1)

B-team: 2 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 20 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 2 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 25 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 20 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 20 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 60 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 136 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 2 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 150 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 5 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 5 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 10 Lake Assad **P28** (14.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 27 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 8 at roost count and 5 at site counts, Lake Tishreen (16.2); 4 10 km north-west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 2 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 3 oxbow W13 (18.2); 4 Mheimideh (19.2); 3 oxbow W23 (19.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 6 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 14 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2); 159 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter, usually in relatively low numbers, but with counts of >100 on Lake Assad and at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

#### **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

A-team: 3 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 14 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 5 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 4 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 8 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 20 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 7 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 45 Mheimideh (15.1); 4 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 12 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 4 oxbow W22 (16.1); 40 Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 1 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 20 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 30 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 55 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 5 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 140 Jabbul Dyke **P12** (10.2); 195 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 20 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 5

Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 20 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 2 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 10 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2); 4 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 2 Doura Europos (18.2); 2 Euphrates **P54** (19.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 11 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 4 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 1 10 km north-west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 Jdeda oxbow W6; 3 oxbow W13 (18.2); 19 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 oxbow W23 (19.2); 20 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 5 Euphrates **P111** (20.2); 7 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 9 Lower Khabur reservoir (20.2); 2 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 6 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2); 45 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter but usually in relatively low numbers

**Northern Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita*

B-team: 5 near Palmyra (20.2)

C-team: 5 near Palmyra (22.2)

Assessment of status: very rare breeding bird, returning to breeding site in late February

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*

B-team: 8 Jabbul Dyke **P12** (10.2); 42 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 15 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 3 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2)

C-team: 6 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: only recorded from Sabkhat al-Jabbul

Comment: a large breeding colony found at Sabkhat al-Jabbul in May 2005 (D. Murdoch, pers. ob.)

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*

B-team: 590 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 1170 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 545 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 2500 Jabbul, Abu Dreicha (10.2); 6200 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 1680 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2); 1 oxbow W11 (16.2)

C-team: 1 al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2); 9800 (incomplete count), Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: present in winter in internationally important numbers at Sabkhat al-Jabbul; elsewhere rare

**White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*

A-team: 12 flying over, Euphrates north of Lake Tishreen (10.1); 70 on lake, 70 flying over after dark, Lake Assad, western shore (12.1)

B-team: >5000 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 500 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2); 500 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2)

C-team: 2307 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 7600 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: winter visitor with significant populations on Sabkhat al-Jabbul and lower Khabur reservoir

Comment: appears to be confined to large waterbodies, presumably because they can detect potential threats at long range

**(Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus*)

B-team: 1 probable, Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2). A 'strange' goose call was located coming from two distant geese in flight; it was disyllabic and higher-pitched than the call of White-fronted Goose. Five minutes later, the call was again heard and two geese flew overhead, one noticeably larger than the other. The smaller goose appeared darker, with a shorter neck, 10-15% smaller head, and few or no bars on the belly, but it could not be confidently identified to species level.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*

A-team: 1 flying over, Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1)

B-team: 10 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 4 Jabbul Dyke **P12** (10.2); 115 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 70 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 1 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: a small population winters on Sabkhat al-Jabbul; elsewhere a rare winter visitor

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

A-team: 3 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 1 Lake of Homs (7.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1); 32 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 46 Sabkhat Muh (17.1)

B-team: 800 Jabbul village (10.2); 50 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 1230 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 900 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 1803 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 50 Jabbul, Abu Dreicha (10.2); 20 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 8500 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake **P33** (15.2); 40 oxbow W11 (16.2); 30 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2); 10 Sabkhat Muh (21.2)



C-team: 4 Mheimideh (19.2); 8 al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2); common (probably >10000) Jabbul (27.2)  
Assessment of status: abundant at Sabkhat al-Jabbul; elsewhere, a widespread winter visitor in small numbers

#### **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

A-team: 12 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1)

B-team: 42 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 48 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2)

C-team: 11 flying over Euphrates towards north-west, Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 9 Lower Khabur reservoir, meadows in south-eastern corner (21.2)

Assessment of status: winters in small numbers

#### **Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

A-team: 230+ Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 165+ Lake Tishreen (9.1, 10.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 130 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 20 Mheimideh (15.1); 5 oxbow W22 (16.1); 6 Sabkhat Muh (17.1)

B-team: 38 Lake Homs, southern shore (8.2); 100 Lake Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 5 Lake Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 200 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 400 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 100 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 20 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 100 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 40 Euphrates near Madan Jadid (16.2); 20 Mheimideh (17.2); 10 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 88 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 6 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 2 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 21 Mheimideh (19.2); 18 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 3 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 580 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread winter visitor in small numbers, mainly at Lake of Homs, Lake Tishreen and Sabkhat al-Jabbul

#### **Teal** *Anas crecca*

A-team: 350+ Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 450+ Lake Tishreen (9.1, 10.1); 735 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 45 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 15 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 80 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 70 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 690 Mheimideh (15.1); 60 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1300 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 60 oxbow W22 (16.1); 20 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 380 Sabkhat Muh (17.1)

B-team: >410 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 60 Jabbul village (10.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 350 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 280 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 20 Jabbul Dyke P14 (10.2); 70 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 100 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); >50 Lake Tishreen, northern end P16 (13.2); 100 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 50 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 250 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 80 oxbow W11 (16.2); 100 Mheimideh (17.2); 10 Doura Europos (18.2); 250 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 40 Halabbiyah (19.2); 110 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2); 15 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2); 50 Sabkhat Muh (21.2)

C-team: 97 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 24 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 2 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 10 oxbow W13 (18.2); 110 Euphrates between W13 and W14 (18.2); 27 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 249 Mheimideh (19.2); 48 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 15 Euphrates between W28 and W30 (20.2); 6 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 10 Gharanij floodplain W31 (20.2); 520 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 2 al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2); 21 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 15 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter in relatively small numbers

#### **Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

A-team: 3 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 5 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 9 Lake Tishreen (9.1, 10.1); 23 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 38 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 200 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 8 Mheimideh (15.1); 1 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 10 oxbow W22 (16.1); 9 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 15 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 15 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 12 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 620 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 P52 (16.2); 2 Halabbiyah (19.2); 150 Euphrates N of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 3 Lake Tishreen (15.2, 16.2); 2 Euphrates between W13 and W14 (18.2); 2 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 24 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: winters in small numbers, with the largest counts on the River Euphrates at Halabbiyah

#### **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

A-team: >60 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 270 Lake Tishreen (9.1, 10.1); 28 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 50 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 20 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 250 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 115 Mheimideh (15.1); 30 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 280 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 40 oxbow W22 (16.1); 30, Sabkhat Muh (17.1)

B-team: 16 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 40 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 10 Jabbul village (10.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 7 Jabbul Dyke P14 (10.2); 2 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 20 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); >100 Lake Tishreen, northern end P16 (13.2); 20 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 200 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 6 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 10 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 40 Mheimideh (17.2); 50 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 5 Halabbiyah (19.2); 24 Euphrates N of Halabbiyah (19.2); 20 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2); 35 Sabkhat Muh (21.2)

C-team: 120 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 206 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 1 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 9 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 4 Euphrates at ar-Raqqa (17.2); 12 Euphrates between W13 and W14 (18.2); 4 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 72 Mheimideh (19.2); 137 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 8 al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter, commonest on the reservoirs

#### **Pintail** *Anas acuta*

A-team: >15 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 60+ Lake Tishreen (9.1, 10.1); 4 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 2 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 7 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 10 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 52 Mheimideh (15.1); 4 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); 40 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)

B-team: 5 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 10 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 50 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 250 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 1 Jabbul village (10.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 180 Jabbul Dyke P14 (10.2); 40 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 50 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 250 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 5 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); >1 Lake Tishreen, northern end P16 (13.2); 15 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 2 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 80 Mheimideh (17.2); 10 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 20 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2)

C-team: 13 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 62 Mheimideh (19.2); 13 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 9 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2); 74 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread winter visitor in small numbers, particularly to Lake of Homs and Sabkhat al-Jabbul

#### **Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

B-team: 2 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 2 oxbow W11 (16.2)

Assessment of status: these could have been wintering individuals, early migrants or summer visitors

Comment: these records suggest that this species does not winter in Syria

#### **Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

A-team: >5800 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 10+ Lake Tishreen (10.1); 45 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 3 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 20 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 40 Mheimideh (15.1); 25 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 35 Sabkhat Muh (17.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 150 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 40 Jabbul village (10.2); 50 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 2 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 3 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 600 Jabbul Dyke P14 (10.2); 150 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 10 Jabbul, Abu Dreicha (10.2); 100 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 50 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 10 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 40 oxbow W11 (16.2); 30 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 22 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2); 100 Sabkhat Muh (21.2)

C-team: 3 Euphrates at ar-Raqqa (17.2); 8 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 7 Euphrates between W13 and W14 (18.2); 114 Mheimideh (19.2); 12 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 P112 (20.2); 331 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 5, al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2); 8 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 5 Jabbul SE Lake; 8 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: uncommon but widespread in winter, with large flocks at favoured sites (Lake of Homs, Sabkhat al-Jabbul, Upper Khabur reservoir)

#### **Marbled Teal** *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

C-team: 4 Mheimideh (19.2)

Assessment of status: these could have been wintering individuals, early migrants or summer visitors

Comment: none was seen at Mheimideh on 15.1, when it was thoroughly covered, or on 17.2. Classified by Birdlife International (Birdlife International 2000) as Vulnerable with an estimated world population of 10000 – 20000 individuals

#### **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*

A-team: 62 Lake Tishreen (9.1-10.1); 285 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 11 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 3 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 7 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: 7 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 40 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 60 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 300 Ba'ath Lake **P33** (15.2); 350 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 20 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 2 Euphrates N of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 45 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 187 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 2 10 km W of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 10 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 **P112** (20.2); 98, Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 14 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2)  
Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon in winter, with Ba'ath Lake and Lake Tishreen the best sites

#### **Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

A-team: 75+ Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); >4300 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 16200 Lake Tishreen (9.1, 10.1); 5100 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 130 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 720 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 150 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 400 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 820 Mheimideh (15.1); 10 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1)  
B-team: 8 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 5000 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 20 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 50 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 144 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 950 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 40 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 300 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 15000 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P20** (13.2); 1000 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); 30 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 20 Lake Assad **P28** (14.2); 1300 Ba'ath Lake **P33** (15.2); Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 1000 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 100 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 80 Mheimideh (17.2); 60 Doura Europos (18.2); 162 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 6346 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 3870 Lake Tishreen north-eastern corner (16.2); 5 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 4 oxbow W1 (17.2); 4 ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 Euphrates between W13 and W14 (18.2); 245 Mheimideh (19.2); 60 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 **P112** (20.2); 660 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 170 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 70 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2)  
Assessment of status: very common in winter on the reservoirs, particularly Lake Tishreen and Lake of Homs; elsewhere, widespread but in small numbers

#### **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*

A-team: 5 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 470 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 50 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 25 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 108 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 45 Mheimideh (15.1)  
B-team: 7 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 4 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 2 Jabbul Dyke **P12** (10.2); 4 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 25 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 30 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 2 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P20** (13.2); 14 Ba'ath Lake **P33** (15.2); 50 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 40 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 Doura Europos (18.2)  
C-team: 98 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 6 10 km W of ar-Raqqa; 132 oxbow W1 (17.2); 5 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 6 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 17 Mheimideh (19.2); 16 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 **P112** (20.2); 2 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 5 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2)  
Assessment of status: relatively large numbers winter in suitable habitat (well-vegetated shallow pools)  
Comment: particularly common at Lake Tishreen, which may hold internationally significant numbers.  
Classified by Birdlife International (Birdlife International 2000) as Near Threatened

#### **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

A-team: >350 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 2 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 425 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 250 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 190 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 10 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 10 Mheimideh (15.1)  
B-team: 70 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 1 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 20 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 10 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P20** (13.2); 1 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 20 Lake Assad **P28** (14.2); 60 Ba'ath Lake **P33** (15.2); 1000 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 25 Euphrates near Madan Jadid (16.2); 55, Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 4 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 2 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2)  
Assessment of status: present in winter in small numbers; commonest at Ba'ath Lake and Lake of Homs

#### **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2)  
Assessment of status: probably the third Syrian record  
Comment: probably a vagrant to Syria

#### **Smew** *Mergellus albellus*

B-team: 2 Euphrates N of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 14 redheads, Lower Khabur reservoir, south-eastern corner (21.2)  
Assessment of status: the first Syrian records; a rare wintering bird or vagrant in Syria.

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala*

A-team: 7 Lake of Homs (7.1); 21 Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: 11 Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 8 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 5 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 pair Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: winters in low numbers

Comment: classified by Birdlife International (Birdlife International, 2000) as Endangered. See 'Summary and Recommendations' for fuller discussion.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

A-team: 2 Aleppo – Bab road (9.1); 1 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 7 Euphrates at ar-Raqqa (12.1); 1 Sukkarya, south of Lake Assad (12.1); 2 north of Ba'ath Lake (13.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 ar-Raqqa – Shnan (14.1); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 4 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 2 oxbow W22 (16.1); 40 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 12 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 100, ar-Raqqa – Lake Assad (14.2); 20 oxbow W27a (18.2); 4 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); >25 Deir ez-Zor – Palmyra (20.2)

C-team: 7 ar-Raqqa (16.2); 1 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 ar-Raqqa – oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 2 Deir ez-Zor – Mheimideh (19.2); 5 Mheimideh (19.2); 1, Deir ez-Zor – oxbow W23 (19.2); 7 oxbow W23 (19.2); 1 oxbow W23 – Tel al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 166 near roost in conifer trees, just outside Deir ez-Zor, Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 W28 – W30 (20.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2); 207 rubbish dump just outside Deir ez-Zor, Deir ez-Zor – Palmyra (22.2); 15 Palmyra – Hama (27.2)

Assessment of status: present but scarce in mid-winter; commoner along the lower Euphrates valley in late February

Comment: many records refer to early migrants or birds overwintering towards the Iraqi border

**Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*

B-team: 7 'Griffon cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 1 over Mount Orh uplands (26.2)

Assessment of status: very rare, probably resident

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

A-team: 8 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 120 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 28 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1 Euphrates at ar-Raqqa (12.1); 11 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 35 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 10 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1); 1 north of Ba'ath Lake (13.1); 16 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 2 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 2 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 5 Mheimideh (15.1); 5 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 5 oxbow W22 (16.1); 1, Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 1 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 3 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 20 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 35 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 3 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 2 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 20 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 10 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 10 oxbow W11 (16.2); 3 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 3 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 1 Halabbiyah (19.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 46 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 55 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 2 10 km W of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 5 oxbow W1 (17.2); 6 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 2 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 1 new bridge at ar-Raqqa (17.2); 3 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 7, oxbow W13 (18.2); 1 oxbow W13 – oxbow W14 (18.2); 1 oxbow W14 (18.2); 1 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 3 Zalabbiyah – Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 4 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – oxbow W23 (19.2); 3 oxbow W23 (19.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 W28 – W30 (20.2); 1 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 1 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 10 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread and common in winter

Comment: impossible to judge proportion of residents to winter visitors; many, particularly at Lake Tishreen, are likely to be winter visitors

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

A-team: 1 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 3 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 10 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 4 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 8 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 1 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 2 Mheimideh (15.1); 1 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); 1 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 oxbow W22 (16.1); 2 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 1 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 20 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2);



2 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 2 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 1 Resafe (14.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2)

C-team: 1 male, 2 females Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 female Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner; 2 ringtails Maskanali – al-Mansura (16.2); 2 ringtails 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 ringtails oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 ringtail Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 1 ringtail Zalabbiyah – Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 2 ringtails Mheimideh (19.2); 1 oxbow W23 (19.2); 2 Tel al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 1 adult male Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2); 1 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied (22.2); 1 east of Palmyra (25.2); 3 Palmyra – Hama (27.2); 3 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread and reasonably common in winter

#### **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*

A-team: 2 adult males Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 1 adult male Huweijjat Shnan R3 (14.1)

C-team: 1 adult female Manbij – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 1 ringtail Maskanali – al-Mansura (16.2); 1 male Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 female oxbow W23 – Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 1 second-year female Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 2 males Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2); 1 male Tal Brak ruins – al-Hasakah (21.2); 3 males, 1 female Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 1 second-year female Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (24.2)

Assessment of status: scarce in winter

Comment: many February records may refer to early migrants. Classified by Birdlife International (Birdlife International 2000) as Near Threatened, with an estimated world population of 20000 pairs.

#### **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*

A-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (10.1); 4 Shnan oxbow W2/Huweijjat Shnan R3 (14.1); 1 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 Euphrates at Huweijjat al-Jurdi (16.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 1 Doura Europos (18.2); 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2)

C-team: 3-4 adults Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 2 adults as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (probably the same birds) (17.2); 1 adult over Agricultural University grounds, Deir ez-Zor (19.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon in winter, favouring the Euphrates valley, particularly Huweijjat woods bordering wetlands

Comment: classified by Birdlife International (Birdlife International 2000) as Vulnerable, with an estimated world population of 2500 – 10000 individuals

#### **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*

B-team: 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2)

C-team: 3 adults Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (24.2); 5 adults Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (25.2)

Assessment of status: scarce in February

Comment: the pattern of these records suggests that Steppe Eagles are probably only migrants to Syria, though occasional birds might overwinter in the Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra

#### **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*

A-team: 1 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 1 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 4 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 3 oxbow W22 (16.1); 3 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 2 Doura Europos (18.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 Maskanali – al-Mansura (16.2); 1 ar-Raqqa (16.2); 1 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 pair oxbow W1 (17.2); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 4 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 1 as-Sabkha village (17.2); 4 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 3, Mheimideh; 3 Deir ez-Zor – oxbow W23 (19.2); 2, oxbow W23 (19.2); 3 oxbow W23 – Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 6 Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 1 W28 – W30 (20.2); 3 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 2 Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2); 5 Tal Brak ruins (21.2); 2 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 2 Talila reserve (23.2); 1 east of Palmyra (25.2); 1 north of Palmyra (26.2); 1 Palmyra – Hama (27.2)

Assessment of status: relatively common and widespread in winter

#### **Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

A-team: 2 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter at wetland sites

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

A-team: 5 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 1 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 north of Ba'ath Lake (13.1); 7 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 2 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 1 oxbow W22 (16.1); 1 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector P8 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, northern end P16 (13.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 2 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 1 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2); 2 Doura Europos (18.2); 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2)

C-team: up to 3 Lake Tishreen (15.2-16.2); 2 Maskanali – al-Mansura (16.2); 1 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 2 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 1 as-Sabkha village (17.2); 1 oxbow W13 – W14 (18.2); 2 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 2 Mheimideh (19.2); 3 oxbow W23 (19.2); 1 W28 – W30 (20.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 1 hunting Song Thrushes, Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saaed (22.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 1 Palmyra (22.2); 1 Palmyra – Hama (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

A-team: 4 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 1 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 1 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1 Euphrates at ar-Raqqa (12.1); 1 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 3 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 north of Ba'ath Lake (13.1); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 6 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 1 Mheimideh – Sur al-Kasrah oxbow (15.1); 4 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 oxbow W22 (16.1); 1 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 5 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 2 Jabbul Central Sector P8 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen P19 (13.2); 1 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 2 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 1 Resafe (14.2); 2 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 4 Doura Europos (18.2); 5 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 1-2 Lake Tishreen (15-16.2); 1 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 1 pair oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 pair Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 pair as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 1 Jdeda oxbow W6 (17.2); 1 oxbow W13 (17.2); 1, Zalabbiyah (17.2); 3 Zalabbiyah – Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 1 Mheimideh (19.2); 4 oxbow W23 (19.2); 3 oxbow W23 – Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 1 Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 2 Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 2 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 5 Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2); 2 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 al-Hasakah (21.2); 4 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 1 Talila reserve (23.2); 2 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 1 Bald Ibis breeding cliffs (26.2)

Assessment of status: uncommon but widespread in winter

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

A-team: 2 Sed Wadi Abied (dusk, 6.1); 3 Lake Tishreen, east side (dusk, 9.1); 1 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake, south side (dusk, 11.1); 2 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 1-2 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (8.2-9.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector P8 (12.2); 1 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2)

C-team: 1 Maskanali – al-Mansura (16.2); 1 as-Sabkha village (17.2); 1 Zalabbiyah – Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 1 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 2 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Tal Brak ruins (21.2); 1 Tal Brak – al-Hasakah (21.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied (22.2); 2 Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (25.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

A-team: 1 arable land 1 km north-east of Lake Tishreen (10.1)

Assessment of status: sadly now rare in Syria in winter

Comment: falconry is likely to be the main reason for its decline

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus*

C-team: 1 first-winter, captive in a bedouin tent in Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (24.2-25.2)

Assessment of status: given the numbers with which the larger falcons are caught and traded in the Middle East (Evans 1994), this species is unlikely to be more than an uncommon passage migrant in Syria.

Comment: according to the owners, it was locally caught in September 2003

**Black Francolin** *Francolinus francolinus*

A-team: 1 Huweijat Shnan R3 (14.1); 2 being chased by a harrier, Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 1 field near Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 2 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 2 Halabbiyah (19.2); 1 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 1 male Lake Tishreen, eastern side of reedbed edge (15.2); 1 male Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2)  
Assessment of status: probably fairly common throughout the Euphrates valley

**Chukar** *Alectoris chukar*

B-team: 2 Dawara Cliff (20.2)  
C-team: 2, including calling male, Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 1 near Bald Ibis breeding cliffs (26.2); 4 Jabal al-Bilas reserve (27.2)  
Assessment of status: resident in small numbers; probably a common resident at Jabal al-Bilas

**See-see Partridge** *Ammoperdix griseogularis*

B-team: 2 birds and, separately, a flock of 5 Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 1 pair Tal Brak ruins (21.2)  
Assessment of status: probably an uncommon resident in suitable habitat east of the Euphrates, as well as on ruined sites south of the river. It is said to occur in the desert between Palmyra and the Iraqi border – this might however be the undescribed taxon of Sand Partridge recently found in north-eastern Jordan.  
Comment: the males' head pattern in the flock of 5 at Halabbiyah was distinct from the drawings in the Collins guide (Mullarney *et al* 1999), with a white dot on the lores as depicted in the Middle East guide (Porter *et al* 1996).

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

A-team: 1 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 1 stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 1 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (9.1); ~20 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 10+ Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 2 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 4 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 4 Mheimideh (15.1); Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Under-recorded  
B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 Doura Europos (18.2); 1 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 1 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 2 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 3 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern side (27.2). All but one at Mheimideh were heard but not seen.  
Assessment of status: widespread in winter  
Comment: widespread in most suitable habitat; impossible to estimate numbers but probably common

**Little Crane** *Porzana parva*

C-team: 1 first-winter female al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2)  
Assessment of status: either an occasional winter visitor or an early migrant

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

A-team: 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (16.1)  
C-team: 1, targeted by Great Grey Shrike, Talila reserve (23.2); 1 desert south of Palmyra (25.2)  
Assessment of status: probably winters in small numbers; the February birds could have been migrants

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

A-team: common, Lake Tishreen (40 on 10.1); Ba'ath Lake (11.1, 13.1); Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); Halabbiyah (14.1-15.1); Mheimideh (15.1); Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 1 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Very under-recorded  
B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (12.2); 30 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 3 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); >1 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 1 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 4 oxbow W11 (16.2); 40 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 10 Doura Europos (18.2); 5 Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 5 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 10 km W of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 3 oxbow W1 (17.2); 6 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 3 ar-Raqqa (17.2); 5 oxbow W13 (18.2); 3 Euphrates between oxbows W13 and W14 (18.2); 3 Euphrates between oxbow W14 and Zalabbiyah (18.2); 16 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 oxbow W23 (19.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 3 Euphrates between Mayadin new bridge and Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 1 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 15 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2)  
Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon throughout the Euphrates valley; only one record elsewhere!

**Coot *Fulica atra***

A-team: 260 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); >5800 Lake of Homs (7.1-8.1); 64500 Lake Tishreen (9.1-10.1); 23500 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 3100 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 6100 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 10 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1); 500 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 50 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 950 Halabbiyah (14.1-15.1); 730 Mheimideh (15.1); 2200 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 300 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 40 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 3500 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 300 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 50 Jabbul village (10.2); 500 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 190 Jabbul Dyke **P11** (10.2); 750 Jabbul Dyke **P13** (10.2); 850 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 300 Jabbul, Abu Dreicha (10.2); 300 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 100 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 50 Lake Tishreen, northern end **P16** (13.2); 40000 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 50000 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P20** (13.2); 10000 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); 500 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 300 Lake Assad **P28** (14.2); 12500 Ba'ath Lake **P33** (15.2); Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 6000 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 500 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 100 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 200 Mheimideh (17.2); 5 oxbow W27a (18.2); 100 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 150 Doura Europos (18.2); 200 Euphrates **P54** (19.2); 3500 Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 28370 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 7650 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 516 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1140 oxbow W1 (17.2); 36 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 581 ar-Raqqa (17.2); 40 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 56 oxbow W13 (18.2); 3830 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 769 Mheimideh (19.2); 218 Euphrates between Mheimideh and Deir ez-Zor (19.2); 3 Euphrates between Deir ez-Zor and al-Ashara (20.2); 97 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 81 Euphrates between Mayadin new bridge and Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 40 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 **P112** (20.2); 524 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 71 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 545 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 907 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 331 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 53 Jabbul SE Lake; 4200 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: common to abundant in winter on all waterbodies, particularly on Lake Tishreen

**Purple Gallinule (or Swampphen) *Porphyrio porphyrio***

A-team: 4 (very wary), Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 5 Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (10.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (12.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 6 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 3 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 3 (heard only) Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: probably present but uncommon throughout the Euphrates valley, as well as at Sabkhat al-Jabbul; Mheimideh appears to have a particularly large (or visible?) population

**Common Crane *Grus grus***

B-team: 15 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 30 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 46 Talila reserve (23.2); 3 over desert south-east of Palmyra (24.2); 3 over Iraqi border (25.2)

Assessment of status: winters in small numbers in remote regions such as Hamad desert or protected areas such as Talila reserve

**Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

A-team: 23 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)

B-team: 10 Jabbul village (10.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 5 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P6** (11.2); 15 Jabbul, north-eastern corner **P8** (12.2); 5 oxbow W11 (16.2); 15 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2); 8 Sabkhat Muh (21.2)

C-team: 5 oxbow W13 (18.2); 20 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 1 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 3 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: winters in small numbers; some records may refer to early migrants

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus***

A-team: 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul village (10.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke **P15** (10.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 2 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 Jabbul NW Sector, western side (27.2)

Assessment of status: probably winters in small numbers; some records may refer to early migrants

**Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor***

C-team: 4 heard, Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (25.2)

Assessment of status: either winters in small numbers or early migrants

Comment: a common summer visitor round Palmyra

**Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula***

A-team: 5 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 11 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 3 Euphrates at oxbow W22 (16.1)



B-team: 20 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 20 Jabbul village (10.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector P8 (12.2); 5 oxbow W11 (16.2); 20 salt fields 4 km south-east of Mheimideh (17.2)  
C-team: 5 flying north over Jerablus new bridge (16.2); 26, Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2)  
Assessment of status: widespread in winter but in very small numbers.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

A-team: 13 Gharanij floodplain W31-32, saltpans (16.1)  
B-team: 50 Jabbul village (10.2); 160 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 10 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2); 1 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2); 2 Sabkhat Muh (21.2)  
C-team: 45 saline fields near Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 6 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 2 tiny reservoir, Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (24.2)  
Assessment of status: winters in very small numbers in suitable habitat; some records may refer to early migrants

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii columbinus*

C-team: 7 (including 4 at tiny reservoir) Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (24.2); 3 Hamad desert near Iraqi border (25.2)  
Assessment of status: early migrants or birds wintering in suitable habitat. This species may therefore be a scarce wintering species.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

A-team: 4 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)  
B-team: 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 3 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2)  
C-team: 1 flying over oxbow W13 (18.2)  
Assessment of status: winters in very small numbers  
Comment: numbers possibly dependent on weather in Turkey

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

A-team: 100+ Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 3 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 45 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 1 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 30 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 30 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 650 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 16 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1); 8 Sabkhat Muh (17.1)  
B-team: 3 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 50 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 2300 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 2000 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen; 155 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 30 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 20 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 30 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 30 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 10 oxbow W11 (16.2); 150 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 10 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2); 3 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2)  
C-team: 23 Lake Tishreen, Karakozak bridge (15.2); 2 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 315 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 17 over fields south of Maskanali – al-Mansura highway (16.2); 378 flying, viewpoint over Euphrates, 10 km west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 95 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 24 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 2 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 1, Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 7, Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 29, Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 44 Tal Brak ruins – al-Hasakah (21.2); 12 Palmyra – Hama (27.2); 71 Jabbul, SE Lake area (27.2)  
Assessment of status: still a widespread and fairly common winter visitor in suitable habitat, Lake of Homs holding much the largest flocks

**Sociable Plover** *Vanellus gregarius*

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 4 over Talila reserve (21.2)  
C-team: 3 summer-plumaged adults in flock of 44 Lapwings, fields between Tal Brak ruins and al-Hasakah (21.2)  
Assessment of status: these observations are likely to relate to wintering birds  
Comment: see 'Summary and Recommendations' for fuller discussion

**White-tailed Plover** *Vanellus leucurus*

A-team: 5 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 2 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1) [none at Mheimideh, 15.1]  
B-team: 5 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 10 oxbow W11 (16.2); 8 Mheimideh (17.2); 14 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2)  
C-team: 40 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 1 12 km north-west of oxbow W28 (20.2); 4 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 P112 (20.2); 13 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2)  
Assessment of status: scarce in winter in the Euphrates valley  
Comment: the sequence of records from Mheimideh suggests that many observations refer to early migrants

**Spur-winged Plover** *Vanellus spinosus*

A-team: 13 Mheimideh (15.1); 6 Euphrates above Halabbiyah (15.1)

B-team: 8 Mheimideh (17.2); 15 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen, north-east section (16.2); 3 Euphrates at ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 Euphrates between oxbows W13 and W14 (18.2); 4 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2)

Assessment of status: uncommon in winter; some records may refer to early migrants

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

A-team: 115+ Lake of Homs, southern side (7.1); 2 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (9.1); 8 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 25 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); 10 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 2 Euphrates at oxbow W22 (16.1)

B-team: 2 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 20 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 50 Jabbul village (10.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P14 (10.2); 100 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 2640 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 25 salt fields 4 km south-east of Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 4 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 23 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter, usually in small numbers, but in large flocks at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

B-team: 3 oxbow W11 (16.2); 15 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 1 village north of Sabkhat al-Jabbul between P1 and P2 (27.2)

Assessment of status: either an occasional winter visitor or an early migrant

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

A-team: 50 Lake of Homs, southern side (7.1); 2 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 6 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)

B-team: 20 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 50 Jabbul village (10.2); 20 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 60 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P14 (10.2); 100 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 260 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 11 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 8 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 2 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter, usually in small numbers, but in substantial flocks at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

**Little Stint/Dunlin**

B-team: 30 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2)

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

A-team: 15 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 160 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 2 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 75 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 11 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 18 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 3 Mheimideh (15.1); 2 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); 2 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 8 oxbow W22 (16.1); 1 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul village (10.2); 3 Jabbul Dyke P14 (10.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 15 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 25 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 5 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 6 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2)

C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 3 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 46 oxbow W13 (18.2); 2 oxbow W14 (18.2); 8 Mheimideh (19.2); 19 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 4 tiny oasis, Hamad desert south of Palmyra (24.2), with 2 there (25.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter, usually in small numbers

Comment: can be common when there is suitable habitat, for instance the Ba'ath Lake marshes

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

A-team: 1 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1)

C-team: 1 over Jerablus (dusk, 15.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2)

Assessment of status: winter visitor in very small numbers

Comment: likely to be under-recorded

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

A-team: 2 Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1); 2 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 oxbow W22 (16.1); 3 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 5 Jabbul village (10.2); 100 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke P10 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 28 flying north, Jerablus new bridge (16.2); 3 Lake Tishreen (16.2); 1 Mheimideh (19.2); 10 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 3 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 16 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread winter visitor, usually scarce, but in sizeable numbers at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

#### **Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

A-team: 1 Lake of Homs (7.1); 4 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 140 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 7 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 3 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 7 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 2 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 3 Halabbiyah (14.1-15.1); 5 Mheimideh (15.1); 3 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); 3 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 30 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 10 Euphrates at oxbow W22 (16.1); 6 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 6 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 50 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 60 Jabbul village (10.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 60 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 90 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 850 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 2 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 100 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); 2 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 3 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 2 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 40 oxbow W11 (16.2); 15 oxbow W20 (17.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2); 15 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2); 3 oxbow W27a (18.2); 11, Euphrates P54 (19.2); 15 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2); 20 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2)

C-team: 9 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 38 flying north, Jerablus new bridge (16.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 7 Mheimideh (19.2); 11 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 20 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: winter visitor in small numbers, but in sizeable numbers at Sabkhat al-Jabbul and Lake Tishreen

#### **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*

B-team: 5 Jabbul village (10.2); 5 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 50 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 1 oxbow W11 (16.2)

C-team: 1 Jabbul NW Sector (27.2)

Assessment of status: winter visitor almost exclusively to Sabkhat al-Jabbul

#### **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

A-team: 12 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 2 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 9 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1); 3 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); 1 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 2 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 1 Euphrates at oxbow W22 (16.1)

B-team: 2 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 1 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 1 oxbow W11 (16.2); 1 oxbow W20 (17.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 1 Doura Europos (18.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 at site counts, Lake Tishreen (16.2); 3 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter to most waterbodies but almost always in very small numbers

#### **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

A-team: 1 Lake of Homs (7.1)

Assessment of status: very rare in winter

#### **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

A-team: 1 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 4 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 14 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 1 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 2 Mheimideh (15.1); 2 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 3 Euphrates at oxbow W22 (16.1); 1 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 2 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 3 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2); 2 oxbow W27a (18.2); 1 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2); 4 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2)

C-team: 3 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 6 flying north, Jerablus new bridge (16.2); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 2 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 1 gravel pit between Deir ez-Zor and Mheimideh (19.2); 2 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 oxbow W23 (19.2); 2 Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 1 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 P112 (20.2); 2 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 1 al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2); 1 Palmyra (24.2)

Assessment of status: widespread winter visitor in small numbers

#### **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

A-team: 2 Halabbiyah (14.1)

B-team: 5 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 1 Jerablus new bridge (16.2)  
Assessment of status: rare in winter

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*

A-team: 5 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 45 Mheimideh (15.1); 4 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); 55 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)

B-team: 5 Jabbul village (10.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 1 oxbow W11 (16.2); 20 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2)

C-team: 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 4 Mheimideh (19.2); 69 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 3 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 9 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: scarce but widespread in winter, usually in small numbers

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

A-team: 12 flying south, Euphrates north of Lake Tishreen (10.1); 2 Mheimideh (15.1); 150 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)

B-team: 131 oxbow W11 (16.2)

C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 2 flying over, Jerablus new bridge (16.2); 1 Mheimideh (19.2)

Assessment of status: very local in winter but sometimes in large flocks

**(Eurasian) Curlew** *Numenius arquatus*

A-team: 1 Lake of Homs, Moudan (7.1); 18 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)

B-team: 9 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 34 oxbow W11 (16.2)

C-team: 1 Lower Khabur reservoir, dry grasslands bordering south-eastern corner (21.2)

Assessment of status: very local in winter with small flocks in suitable habitat

Comment: several individuals at oxbow W11 and the single at the Lower Khabur reservoir showed characteristics of the subspecies 'orientalis'.

**Little Gull** *Larus minutus*

A-team: 5 Lake of Homs, southern side (7.1)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*

A-team: recorded from: 100 Lake of Homs (7.1, 8.1); 100 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); ~500 Lake Tishreen (9.1); ~1000 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 30 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1); Halabbiyah (14.1-15.1); 20 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); oxbow W22 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 100 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 1000 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 500 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 3000 Lake of Homs, E of Moudan (9.2); Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 5 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 2000 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 50 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 50 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 10 Euphrates near oxbow W10 (16.2); 500, oxbow W11 (16.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2); 20 Euphrates P54 (19.2)

C-team: 701 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 323 Jerablus (morning roost count, 16.2); 340 Euphrates viewpoint west of ar-Raqqa (from roost, 17.2); 180 Euphrates, north new bridge at ar-Raqqa (evening roost flight, 17.2); 7 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 25 oxbow W13 (18.2); 30 Euphrates (18.2); 42 Euphrates between Zalabbiyah and Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 10 Mheimideh (19.2); 10 oxbow W23 (19.2); 67 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 3 Jabbul, SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: relatively common in winter; the commonest gull

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*

C-team: 1 first-winter, flying north over the main Aleppo-Maskanali highway (16.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei*

A-team: 1 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 1 Lake of Homs (7.1); 30 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 2 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (12.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 50 Jabbul village (10.2); 50 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 1 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 1 Lake Assad P28 (14.2)

C-team: 8 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 150 Jabbul NW Sector, western side, probably preparing to breed on islets (27.2); 170 Jabbul NW Sector, near dam (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but not common in winter, except at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

B-team: 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 10 Lake Tishreen, between P19 and P20 (13.2); 3 oxbow W11 (16.2); 1 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 2 (one second calendar year, one third calendar year), along Maskanali-al-Mansura road (16.2); 2 Euphrates viewpoint west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2)  
Assessment of status: rare but widespread in winter

**Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*

A-team: Lake of Homs (7.1); 3 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 6 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 6 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 8 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); 5 oxbow W22 (16.1)  
B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 1 Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 4 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 1 oxbow W10 (16.2); 7 Euphrates near oxbow W10 (16.2); 11 oxbow W11 (16.2); 3 Doura Europos (18.2); 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2); 1 al-Mustah salt fields (19.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (20.2)  
C-team: 9 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 3 Jerablus new bridge (morning roost count, 16.2); 5 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 1 Euphrates P84 (18.2); 21 Euphrates P111 (20.2); 1 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2)  
Assessment of status: uncommon but widespread in winter

**Caspian (Yellow-legged Gull)** *Larus cachinnans*

A-team: 2 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 1 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 30 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1). Very under-recorded  
B-team: 4 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); >1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2)  
C-team: 7 (including 4 adults and 2 first-winters), Lake Tishreen (15.2, 16.2); 3 Jerablus new bridge (morning roost count, 16.2); 6 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2)  
Assessment of status: very uncommon inland in winter

**Armenian Gull** *Larus armenicus*

A-team: Lake Tishreen (9.1); Ba'ath Lake (11.1); Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 10 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); Lake Assad, north-eastern corner (13.1); Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 120 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); oxbow W22 (16.1). Under-recorded  
B-team: 2 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 20 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 30 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 3 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 3 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 10 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); 5 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); >2 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 10 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 60 oxbow W11 (16.2); 1 Halabbiyah (19.2)  
C-team: 85 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 80 rubbish dump along Aleppo-Manbij road (15.2); 31 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 429 Euphrates viewpoint west of ar-Raqqa P51 (roost, 17.2); 2 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 2 Euphrates, north bridge at ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 13 Euphrates P84 (18.2); 4 oxbow W23 (19.2); 56 Euphrates P111 (20.2); 3 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 5 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 4 Deir ez-Zor, Hotel al-Saeed (22.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 2 Jabbul, SE Lake (27.2)  
Assessment of status: relatively common in winter; the second commonest gull

**Armenian/Caspian (Yellow-legged Gull)** *Larus armenicus/cachinnans*

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 50 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 20 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 40 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 10 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2)

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

C-team: 1 first-winter, Euphrates viewpoint north-west of ar-Raqqa P51 (17.2)  
Assessment of status: rare in winter  
Comment: probably an occasional winter visitor inland

**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica*

B-team: 1 Jabbul Central Sector P8 (12.2)  
Assessment of status: very rare in winter

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

A-team: >300 Lake of Homs (7.1-8.1); 760 Lake Tishreen (9.1-10.1); 460+ Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 5 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 2640 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 40 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1)



B-team: 600-1000 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 1 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 10-20 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 200 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 150 Lake Tishreen P19 (13.2); 10 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 50 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2)  
C-team: 28 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 16 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 2 Jabbul NW Sector, near dams (27.2)

Assessment of status: common in winter on larger waterbodies (Lake of Homs, Lake Tishreen, Lake Assad, Sabkhat al-Jabbul and Ba'ath Lake), with some counts of potentially international significance (eg at Lake Assad); no records from the Euphrates valley below Ba'ath Lake.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*

C-team: a pair flushed by car, Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (25.2)

**Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

A-team: flock of >50 open *Eucalyptus* woods, Lake Assad, south of south-eastern corner (12.1)

B-team: 1 Aleppo – Jerablus (13.2); 20 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 3 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (20.2)

C-team: 1 Jerablus new bridge (morning roost count, 16.2); 1 Euphrates viewpoint north-west of ar-Raqqa P51(17.2); 8 Euphrates Huweijat P84 (18.2); 1 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 Palmyra – Hama road (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon in winter

**Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*

A-team: Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1). Very under-recorded

B-team: 50 Doura Europos (18.2); 5 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 20 mountains north-east of Palmyra (22.2); 1 Hamad desert (25.2); 11 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 8 north of Palmyra (26.2)

Assessment of status: uncommon

Comment: numbers appear to be higher where they are not hunted

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*

C-team: 1 Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2)

Assessment of status: now very rare in winter in habitats visited by the Expedition

Comment: several decades ago this species was a common winter visitor (Baumgart *et al*, 1995)

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

A-team: 5 Aleppo – Bab (9.1); common (including flock of 30) Bab – Manbij (9.1); Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 2 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); >10 Mheimideh (15.1); riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 2 Jabbul village (10.2); 200 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 8 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 20 Mheimideh (17.2); 60 oxbow W27a (18.2); 1 Doura Europos (18.2); 15 Euphrates P54 (19.2)

C-team: common (sometimes numerous) in north and along Euphrates; much rarer in desert habitat in the south. Highest counts: 45 Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); 50-100 Karakozak bridge – Manbij (16.2); 70 Mheimideh (19.2)

Assessment of status: common to abundant along the lower Euphrates but surprisingly local; none seen round Lake of Homs

Comment: most birds are probably resident but it is possible that some are winter visitors.

**Laughing (Palm) Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*

A-team: very common in Homs (8.1) and Aleppo (9.1); looked for but not recorded in Euphrates valley

B-team: centre of Aleppo

C-team: quite common in Aleppo, several seen in Palmyra, but not recorded from the Euphrates valley

Assessment of status: probably a common resident in the conurbations of the west, but apparently absent from the Euphrates valley

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*

B-team: 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2)

Assessment of status: presumably an escapee

Comment: is there a feral colony somewhere?

**Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*

B-team: 1 Mheimideh (17.2)

Assessment of status: probably an early migrant; no unequivocal evidence of wintering

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*

C-team: 1 found dead, Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (21.2)

Assessment of status: probably a rare resident

Comment: breeds at Birecik, Turkey, less than 25 km north of the Syrian/Turkish border

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

A-team: 1 Tel Ahmer, Lake Tishreen, eastern side (9.1); 1 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1 cliff 2 km upstream of Halabbiyah (15.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul, Abu Dreicha (10.2); 6 of race *lilith*, Doura Europos (18.2); 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 1 'Griffon cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 1 Manbij – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 2 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 of race *lilith*, Zalabbiyah (18.2); 1 of race *lilith*, Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 3 Hamad desert (25.2); 1 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 3 mountains north of Palmyra (26.2)

Assessment of status: widespread and relatively common resident

Comment: both darker and paler (*lilith*?) individuals occur; a mixed pair was seen in the mountains north of Palmyra

**(Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*)

B-team: hundreds of pellets, Doura Europos (18.2), but no birds!

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

A-team: 1 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1)

B-team: 1 Doura Europos (18.2)

C-team: 1 of race *guttata*, Tal Brak ruins (21.2)

Assessment of status: probably an uncommon resident

Comment: the individual at Tal Brak was probably a winter visitor as it belonged to a northern subspecies

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*

C-team: 1 Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (25.2)

Assessment of status: probably an early migrant

**Alpine Swift** *Apus melba*

B-team: 8 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2)

C-team: 1 flying north, hills near as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2)

Assessment of status: probably early migrants; no unequivocal evidence of wintering

**Swift sp** *Apus apus/pallidus*

C-team: 1 Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (25.2)

Comment: probably another Pallid Swift

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*

A-team: 6 Lake Tishreen (9.1); 27 Lake Tishreen (10.1); 11 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 24 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 20 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 2 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 4 Halabbiyah (14.1, 15.1); 13 Mheimideh (15.1); 5 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 5 oxbow W22 (16.1); 2 Euphrates at Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); 3 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 5 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 30 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 3 Jabbul Dyke P15 (10.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 3 oxbow W20 (17.2); 15 Mheimideh (17.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 3 Halabbiyah (19.2); 1 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 5 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (15.2); 2 Jerablus new bridge (roost counts, 15.2-16.2); 6 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 1 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 1 Euphrates viewpoint NW of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 4 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 26 oxbow W13 (18.2); 1 Euphrates between oxbows W13 and W14 (18.2); 2 Euphrates between Zalabbiyah and Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 50 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 Mheimideh – Deir ez-Zor (19.2); 3 oxbow W23 (19.2); 5 oxbow W23 – Tell al-Zabary (19.2); 9 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 1 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 8 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 5 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 5 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: common at all waterbodies except in the desert

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

A-team: 1 stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 1 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 40+ Lake Tishreen (9.1-10.1); 4 Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 2 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 2 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 3 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 4 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 1 Halabbiyah (14.1-15.1); 1 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11-12 (15.1); 2 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 3 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 4 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 Jerablus new bridge (morning roost count, 16.2); 1 Euphrates viewpoint north-west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 P112 (20.2); 1 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 1 Jabbul, SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter in small numbers at most suitable waterbodies visited

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

B-team: 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 1 Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 1 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 3 Hamad desert (25.2); 3 road south-east of Palmyra (25.2); 1 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 1 Palmyra – Hama (27.2).

Assessment of status: widespread in late February

Comment: these records may be of wintering birds but are more likely to refer to early migrants as there were no records in January.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

A-team: Damascus – Palmyra (6.1); common, Lake of Homs, fields on southern side (7.1); common, Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 30 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); oxbow W22 (16.1); abundant, Badia S of Palmyra (17.1). Very under-recorded

B-team: common, Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 100 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); Jabbul SE Lake, P4 (11.2); 100 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 100 Euphrates near oxbow W10 (16.2); many, 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2); 500 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 42 Lake Tishreen (15.2); numerous, Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); 12 Lake Tishreen, Karakozak bridge (15.2); 30 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (15.2); 50-100 Karakozak bridge – Manbij (16.2); 300-500 Manbij – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 50-100 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 50 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 4 oxbow W13 (18.2); 170 oxbow W14 – Zalabbiyah (18.2); 500 Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2); numerous as-Shadade – Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 520 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); numerous al-Hasakah area (21.2); Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 10 Tal Brak – al-Hasakah road south of River Khabur (21.2); 70 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 80 al-Shukhna – Qasr el-Heir es-Sharqi (22.2); 500 Talila reserve (23.2); numerous Hamad desert (24.2); 560 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); Palmyra – Hama (27.2); 40 Hama – Aleppo (27.2)

Assessment of status: common and widespread in winter, with a clear preference for drier areas

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

B-team: 9 Lake Assad, Jazirat al-Thawra (14.2)

C-team: 26 Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); 4 Manbij – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 2 tiny oasis in Hamad desert (25.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*

A-team: no records kept

B-team: 2 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 50 Euphrates near oxbow W10 (16.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2); al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); >100 Doura Europos (18.2); 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 50+ Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); numerous, Manbij – Karakozak bridge (15.2); edge of Lake Tishreen (15.2); 50-100 Manbij – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 20 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); oxbow W13 (18.2); 15 Zalabbiyah (18.2); Deir ez-Zor – Mheimideh, Deir ez-Zor – oxbow W23, oxbow W23 – Tell al-Zabary, Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara, Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 20 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade, as-Shadade – Lower Khabur reservoir, Lower Khabur reservoir, al-Hasakah surroundings, Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna, al-Shukhna – Qasr el-Heir es-Sharqi (22.2); Talila reserve (23.2); T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); road south-east of Palmyra (24.2); Palmyra ruins (25.2); Mount Orh uplands (26.2); Palmyra – Hama, Jabbul NW Sector and SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: common throughout Syria except in desert areas



**Hoopoe Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes*

B-team: 20 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 12 Talila reserve (23.2); 2 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 1 Hamad desert, south-east of Palmyra (24.2); 7 Hamad desert (25.2)

Assessment of status: common in suitable habitat

**Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti*

B-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 5 Halabbiyah (19.2); 2 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 2 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 2 edge of Hamad desert (24.2); 2 Hamad desert (25.2); 2 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 2 Bald Ibis site near Palmyra (26.2)

Assessment of status: resident in small numbers in stony desert areas; replaced in sandy habitats by Bar-tailed Desert Lark

**Bar-tailed Desert Lark** *Ammomanes cincturus*

B-team: 4 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 15 Talila reserve (23.2); 3 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2)

Assessment of status: resident in small numbers in sandy desert areas; in rocky areas replaced by Desert Lark

**Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*

C-team: 1 in song, tiny oasis in Hamad desert (25.2)

Assessment of status: either a migrant or a local breeding bird

**Lesser Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella rufescens*

A-team: 2 Damascus – Palmyra (6.1); 1 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); Abu Hamman W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: few, Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 10 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 3 al-Shukhna – Qasr el-Heir es-Sharqi (22.2); 25 Talila reserve (23.2); 25 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (23.2); 49 Hamad desert (25.2)

Assessment of status: locally common in winter in barren or desert areas

**Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra*

A-team: Damascus – Palmyra (6.1); 20 Lake of Homs, north-eastern corner, lava field (7.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 3 Jabbul, Abu Dreicha (10.2); 5 Euphrates near oxbow W10 (16.2)

C-team: 50-100 Manbij – Karakozak bridge (15.2); 20 Lake Tishreen, Karakozak bridge (15.2); 300-500 Karakozak bridge – Manbij (16.2); 62 Manbij – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 30 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 1 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 180 oxbow W14 – Zalabbiyah (18.2); 14 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 2 Upper Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Tal Brak ruins (21.2); 5 Tal Brak – al-Hasakah road, south of river Khabur (21.2); 68 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 60 al-Shukhna – Qasr el-Heir es-Sharqi (22.2); 15 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 9 Hamad desert (25.2); 1 in song Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 7 in song Palmyra – Hama (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread and common in a variety of stony desert and agricultural areas

**Temminck's (Horned) Lark** *Eremophila bilopha*

A-team: common, badia south of Palmyra (17.1)

B-team: 2 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2); 10 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 10 al-Shukhna – Qasr el-Heir es-Sharqi (22.2); 12 Talila reserve (23.2); 4 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 11 Hamad desert (24.2); 64 Hamad desert (25.2); 12, Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 3 Palmyra – Hama (27.2)

Assessment of status: common in a variety of desert habitats round Palmyra

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

A-team: 6 Euphrates north of Lake Tishreen (10.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake (11.1)

B-team: 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

Comment: are these birds residents?

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

B-team: 3 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 1 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 15 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 20 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 1 Euphrates near oxbow W10 (16.2); 8 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2)

C-team: 20 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 al-Hasakah (21.2); 9 al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2); 1 Hamad desert (25.2); 2 Sed Wadi Abied – Bald Ibis colony (26.2); 2, Jabbul, western side (27.2)

Assessment of status: probably early migrants

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica*

B-team: 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2)

C-team: 12 Jerablus minaret (dusk, 15.2); 14 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 3 Hamad desert, 6 Palmyra (25.2)

Assessment of status: probably early migrants

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

A-team: 1 Lake of Homs, Moudan (7.1); 20 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); >10 Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1); 1 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 40 Mheimideh (15.1); 1 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); oxbow W22 (16.1); Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 40 Jabbul village (10.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 2 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 2 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 3 Lake Tishreen P19 (13.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 5 oxbow W11 (16.2); 1 oxbow W20 (17.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 salt fields south-east of Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 12 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern corner (16.2); 1 Euphrates viewpoint north-west of ar-Raqa (17.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 1 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 30 oxbow W13 (18.2); 1 Euphrates between Zalabbiyah and Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 8 Zalabbiyah (19.2); 1 Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 23 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 P112 (20.2); 6 Jabbul, SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread and relatively common in winter, nearly always along the edges of water

**Siberian Water (Buff-bellied) Pipit** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus*

C-team: 1 oxbow W13 (18.2)

Assessment of status: the first record for Syria

Comment: quite possibly a rare winter visitor, as Water Pipits winter quite commonly and this (sub)species winters in very small numbers in southern Israel

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*

A-team: 2 Lake of Homs, northern shore (8.1); >10, Ba'ath Lake, northern shore (11.1); >100 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 1 Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); 2 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 2-3 Lake of Homs, north-western corner, chicken farm P91 (9.2); Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 3 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 1 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 2 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2)

C-team: 1 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: winters in small numbers, mainly in wet areas near reservoirs; common at Ba'ath Lake where there is a large area of suitable habitat. Some individuals might have been early migrants.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

A-team: 5 Lake of Homs, north-eastern corner, lava field (7.1); ~10 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); >100 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 10 Mheimideh (15.1); <10 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); oxbow W22 (16.1); Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Very under-recorded

B-team: 2 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 1 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 1 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); Jabbul village (10.2); 15 Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 2 Manbij – Lake Tishreen (15.2); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 15 oxbow W13 (18.2); 50 Zalabbiyah (18.2); Deir ez-Zor – Mheimideh (19.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter but usually in small numbers

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

A-team: 2 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 50 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1); Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 2 Lake Assad, Qalaat Jaaber (12.1); 2 Huweijat Shnan R3 (14.1); 50 Mheimideh (15.1); 2 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); Euphrates wood at oxbow W22 (16.1); Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Very under-recorded

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); Jabbul village (10.2); 15 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 15 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 300 Jabbul Dyke P10 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen P19 (13.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 50 oxbow W20 (17.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 100 Doura Europos (18.2)

C-team: 34 Lake Tishreen (15-16.2); 7 Euphrates viewpoint north-west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 oxbow W13 (18.2); 75 oxbow W14 – Zalabbiyah (18.2); 50 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 5 Mheimideh (19.2); Deir ez-Zor – oxbow W23 (19.2); 1 Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 8 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 29 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 6 al-Shukhna reservoir (22.2); 15 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 1 Hamad desert (25.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: relatively common and widespread in winter

*Motacilla alba 'dukhunensis'*

C-team: several, readily identified by the broad white edges to the secondaries and tertiaries, al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2)

#### **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

A-team: 1 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, northern shore (11.1); 1 riverside north of Halabbiyah (15.1)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

Comment: not recorded in February, so it may depart very early

#### **(Blue-headed) Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flava*

C-team: 1 male Mheimideh (19.2)

Assessment of status: probably an early migrant

#### **(Black-headed) Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava feldegg*

C-team: 1 male Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: probably an early migrant

#### **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*

A-team: 1 immature male Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: 5 Jabbul village (10.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2)

C-team: 3 males (2 first-summer and 1 adult) Mheimideh (19.2); 1 male Jabbul P1-P2 (27.2)

Assessment of status: 5 records from 2 sites; appears to be rare and local in winter

#### **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*

A-team: 1 stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 1 Jerablus (10.1); Lake Tishreen northern end (10.1); 2 Ba'ath Lake, northern shore (11.1); 2 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 Mheimideh (15.1); 1 riverside north of Halabbiyah (15.1); 1 Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 2 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 1 oxbow W10 (16.2); 2 oxbow W11 (16.2); 1 oxbow W20 (17.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 4 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (15.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 male as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 6 Mheimideh (19.2); 1 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter

#### **Red-spotted Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica svecica*

B-team: 1 male Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 1 male Mheimideh (19.2)

#### **White-spotted Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica cyaneola*

C-team: 1 male Abu Hammam oxbow W30 P112 (20.2)

#### **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

A-team: 1 Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 1 Manbij – Lake Tishreen (9.1); 2 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 1 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1 Lake Assad, Qalaat Jaaber (12.1); 1 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); 2 Halabbiyah (14.1- 15.1); 3 riverside north of Halabbiyah (15.1); Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, north-west corner, chicken farm P91 (9.2); 1 Jabbul village (10.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 2 Resafe (14.2); 2 (1 of subspecies *semirufus*), Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 1 Euphrates P54 (19.2); 1 Halabbiyah (19.2); 1 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2)

C-team: up to 2 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (15-16.2); 2 Manbij – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 3 ar-Raqqa – oxbow W1 (17.2); 3 oxbow W1 (17.2); 3 Zalabbiyah (18.2); 1 male Deir ez-Zor – Mheimideh (19.2); 1 Mheimideh (19.2); 2 males oxbow W23 (19.2); 3 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 male, 1 female al-Hasakah (21.2); 1 male Tal Brak ruins (21.2); 1 male Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 2 Talila reserve

(23.2); 1 Hamad desert (25.2); 1, east of Palmyra (25.2); 10 Palmyra ruins (25.2); 1 Palmyra – Hama (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter in small numbers

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

A-team: 1 stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 1 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 2 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 Huweijat Shnan R3 (14.1); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); oxbow W22 (16.1); Euphrates wood at W22 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore **P5** (11.2); 1 Lake Tishreen **P19** (13.2); 1 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2); 2 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (20.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but scarce in winter

**Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata rubicola*

A-team: 1 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 1 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1); 1 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); 1 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 Mheimideh – Sur al-Kasrah (15.1); al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1); common, Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (16.1). Very under-recorded

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 4 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); common, Lake of Homs, peninsula between Moudan and Dbeen (9.2); Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 2 oxbow W27a (18.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 1 Euphrates **P54** (19.2)

C-team: 3 Lake Tishreen, Karakozak bridge (15.2); 1 male Lake Tishreen, eastern side (15.2); 1 male Maskanali – al Mansura (16.2); 1 ar-Raqqa – oxbow W1 (17.2); 7 oxbow (17.2); 3 males, 3 females oxbow W13 (18.2); 1 Zalabbiyah – Deir ez-Zor (18.2); 3 males, 3 females Mheimideh (19.2); 1 male oxbow W23 (19.2); 1 female Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 1 male, 1 female al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 1 male al-Ashara – oxbow W30 (20.2); 2 males, 3 females small oxbow near oxbow W30 (20.2); 7 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 2 males, 1 female Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 male Talila reserve (23.2); 1 male east of Palmyra (25.2); 2 Wadi el Abied (26.2)

Assessment of status: winters in small numbers in a wide variety of open habitats

**Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maura maura*

B-team: 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 1 male Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 male al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 1 second-summer male Abu

Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but scarce in winter in lower Euphrates valley (south-east of Deir ez-Zor)

**Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maura variegata*

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke **P10** (12.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 2 males oxbow W13 (18.2); 1 male al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 males small oxbow near oxbow W30 (20.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but scarce in winter, mainly in lower Euphrates valley (south-east of Deir ez-Zor)

**Isabelline Wheatear**

B-team: 1 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2); 1 al-Shukhna reservoir (20.2)

C-team: 1 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 4 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 4 al-Shukhna – Qasr el-Hair es-Sharqi (22.2); 1 mountains north of Palmyra (22.2); 13, including many pairs singing and displaying, Talila reserve (23.2); 3 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 2 edge of Hamad desert (24.2); 15 Hamad desert (25.2); 2 road east of Palmyra (25.2); 3 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied – Bald Ibis breeding cliffs (26.2); 9 Palmyra – Hama (27.2); 1 Jabbul, western side (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in late February, probably early migrants

Comment: several individuals showing territorial behaviour at Talila reserve were probably breeding, in conditions more favourable (with less disturbance and overgrazing) than in the surrounding desert/former steppe

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti*

B-team: 2 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2); 1 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 1 male T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 2 males Hamad desert (25.2).

Assessment of status: uncommon in winter in desert habitats

**Finsch's Wheatear** *Oenanthe finschii*

A-team: 3-5, including singing birds, Damascus – Palmyra (6.1); 1 Halabbiyah (15.1); 1 Palmyra ruins (17.1)

B-team: 2 Lake of Homs, north-western corner, chicken farm P91 (9.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, P4 (11.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 3 Doura Europos (18.2); 1 Halabbiyah (19.2); 1, Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 3 males Zalabbiyah (18.2); 2 males Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 1 male al-Shukhna – Qasr el-Hair es-Sharqi (22.2); 12 males, 8 females Talila reserve (23.2); 1 Hamad desert (24.2); 6 males Hamad desert (25.2); 9 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 9 Palmyra – Hama (27.2); 1 Jabbul NW Sector, western side (27.2)

Assessment of status: relatively common and widespread in winter

**Mourning Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugens*

B-team: 2 'Eagle Owl cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 3 Hamad desert (25.2); 3 road east of Palmyra (25.2); 3 pairs, holding territory, Palmyra ruins (25.2); 2 Mount Orh uplands (26.2); 2 Palmyra – Hama (27.2)

Assessment of status: uncommon in winter in the mountains around Palmyra

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*

B-team: 1 Doura Europos (18.2)

C-team: 2 males Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra (25.2); 2 (song only) Mount Orh uplands (26.2)

Assessment of status: these records may refer to early migrants or wintering individuals

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

A-team: 1 Euphrates north of Lake Tishreen (10.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 Huweijat Shnan R3 (14.1); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); Euphrates wood at oxbow W22 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 3 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2)

C-team: 3 viewpoint over Euphrates west of ar-Raqqa (18.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon in winter; some records may refer to early migrants. Always very wary

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

A-team: 2+ Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, northern shore (9.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2)

C-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern side (15-16.2); 2 Euphrates viewpoint west of ar-Raqqa (18.2); 7 Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saeed (22.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon in winter; some records may refer to early migrants

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

B-team: 2 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

A-team: 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 1 Huweijat Shnan R3 (14.1); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 1 Lake Tishreen P19 (13.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 2 Halabbiyah (19.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon in winter in areas visited by the Expedition; these records are unlikely to refer to migrants

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

A-team: 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1)

Assessment of status: rare in winter in areas visited by the Expedition

**Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler)** *Cisticola juncidis*

A-team: 1 Ba'ath Lake, N side, in *Typha* (11.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter in areas visited by the Expedition

Comment: these birds may be either winter visitors or resident. Baumgart *et al* (1995) stated that this species has a coastal distribution in Syria.



**Graceful Warbler** *Prinia gracilis*

A-team: no specific records

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, E of Moudan (9.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2); 20 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 2 Lake Tishreen, Karakozak bridge (15.2); 2 Tishreen, north-eastern section (16.2); 2 Euphrates viewpoint W of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 2 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 4 oxbow W13 (18.2); 1 oxbow W14 (18.2); 4 Mheimideh (19.2); 4 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 1 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saeed (22.2); 2 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2); 5 Jabbul SE Lake, southern side (27.2)

Assessment of status: in small numbers throughout Syria, except in true desert areas

**Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

C-team: 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2)

Assessment of status: apparently the first record of this species from the Syrian Euphrates

**Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon mimica*

B-team: 5 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P10 (12.2); 1 Mheimideh (17.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 1 singing oxbow W1 (17.2); 3 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 3 Mheimideh (19.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 oxbow near oxbow W30 (20.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter, at Sabkhat al-Jabbul and along the Euphrates valley

Comment: no records from January. These records could be of resident birds or migrants

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

B-team: 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 1 heard singing al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 3 heard singing Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: probably early migrants rather than wintering birds

Comment: as no difference in song was detected compared to European birds, these may not have been birds of the Middle Eastern race *fuscus*.

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*

A-team: 1 singing, stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 1 singing, Lake Tishreen, ravine at W end of Karakozak bridge (9.1); Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); common, Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); Mheimideh (15.1); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); oxbow W22 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: >2 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 1 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 2 Jabbul Dyke P10 (12.2); 3 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 10 Mheimideh (17.2); 2 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 2 Jerablus new bridge (16.2); 2 Euphrates viewpoint west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1, Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 oxbow W13 – W14 (18.2); 3 Euphrates P84 (18.2); 10 Mheimideh (19.2). All except one were heard rather than seen.

Assessment of status: common throughout the Euphrates valley

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

C-team: 1 male Lake Tishreen, north-eastern side, garden (16.2); 2 Hamad desert south-east of Palmyra, pumping station (25.2)

Assessment of status: uncommon wintering birds or early migrants

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*

A-team: 1 male Huweijat Shnan, riverside thorn scrub (14.1)

C-team: 2 Talila reserve (23.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

Comment: the February birds may be early migrants

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* / **Menetries' Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea*

B-team: 1 heard Lake Assad P26 (14.2)

**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata*

C-team: 1 female-type Talila reserve, scrub near water (23.2); 5 in song Jabal al-Bilas (27.2)

Assessment of status: probably only a migrant (or rare wintering bird) near Palmyra

Comment: Jabal al-Bilas is a reserve between Palmyra and Hama where hunting and grazing have apparently been prohibited for 10 years. Spectacled Warbler might possibly breed at Jabal al-Bilas.

**Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia (nana) nana*

B-team: 2 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 5 Talila reserve (23.2)

Assessment of status: probably a scarce winter visitor to Talila reserve, possibly only a migrant

Comments: this may be a new species for Syria as it is not mentioned by Baumgart *et al* (1995).

Elsewhere the vegetation is grossly overgrazed, so it is possible that Desert Warbler and species with similar ecological requirements can only overwinter at Talila reserve, and perhaps at reserves for desert flora west of Palmyra. It winters in south Israel.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

A-team: 2 stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 4 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 1 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); Euphrates wood at W22 (16.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, E of Moudan (9.2); 20 Lake Tishreen, northern end **P16** (13.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P19** (13.2); 10 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 2 Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 1 Euphrates **P54** (19.2); 5 Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, northern side (16.2); 1 Euphrates west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 2 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1, Euphrates north bridge, ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saeed (22.2); 2 Talila reserve (22.2); 7 T3 road, Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2); 8 Hamad desert (24.2-25.2); 1 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter in small numbers; some records may refer to early migrants

**'Eastern' Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita abietinus*

A-team: 4 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner, young conifer plantation (12.1); 4 Huweijat Shnan R3 (14.1); oxbow W22 (16.1); >20 calling Huweijat al-Jurdi (16.1)

C-team: 7 oxbow W1 (17.2); 1, Euphrates **P82** (18.2); 4 Euphrates Huweijat **P84** (18.2); 5 Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saeed (22.2); 4 Sed Wadi Abied (26.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter in small numbers, mainly in the lower Euphrates valley; some records may refer to early migrants

**Bonelli's Warbler sp** *Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis*

A-team: 1 Lake Assad, north-eastern corner, in young conifer plantation (12.1)

Assessment of status: very rare (and unexpected) in winter

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus*

B-team: 1 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2)

Assessment of status: vagrant; probably the first record for Syria

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus*

A-team: 2 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1)

B-team: 3 Lake Tishreen, northern end **P16** (13.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (20.2)

C-team: 9 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter in small numbers

Comment: some records may refer to early migrants

**Great Tit** *Parus major*

A-team: 5, in bankside vegetation, Euphrates north of Lake Tishreen (10.1)

B-team: 5 Lake Tishreen, northern end **P16** (13.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter in the habitats visited by Expedition members

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

A-team: at least 2 flocks of 20+ birds Ba'ath Lake (11.1); one flock Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 2 flocks Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); two flocks heard Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1)

C-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (15.2); 4 Jabbul, SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter in suitable habitat

**Iraq Babbler** *Turdoides altiostriis*

A-team: flock of 7, in reed fringe, Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 8 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 3 flocks Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); at least 3 flocks, with singing males, Mheimideh (15.1); 1 flock Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); 1 calling Euphrates wood at W22 (16.1)

B-team: 10 oxbow W11 (16.2); 15 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 10 Mheimideh (17.2); 20 oxbow W27a (18.2); 10 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2); >5 Doura Europos (18.2); 2-4 Halabbiyah (19.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (20.2)

C-team: most sightings refer to flocks: 7 oxbow W1 (17.2); 11 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 1 W3 (17.2); 10 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 Euphrates P82 (18.2); 11 Mheimideh (19.2); 3 oxbow W23 (19.2); 3 road close to al-Ashara (20.2); 15 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 2 Abu Hammam oxbow W30 (20.2); 6 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 5 Jabbul SE Lake, reeds along the canal entering the lake (27.2)  
Assessment of status: common in reedbeds throughout the Euphrates river valley as far upstream as Ba'ath Lake; appears to be scarce at Lake Tishreen and Sabkhat al-Jabbul  
Comment: the record from Lake Tishreen is by far the most northerly yet. The record at Sabkhat al-Jabbul is the first west of the Euphrates valley. Both are major range extensions.

**White-cheeked Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

C-team: 7 Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saeed (22.2)

Assessment of status: known to be resident in small numbers at Deir ez-Zor

Comment: whether these birds originate from escapes or are genuine colonists from Iraq is unknown. It has been reported from Palmyra in the past but recent searches have been unsuccessful (GS pers.comm.).

**The Isabelline Shrike group** *Lanius (isabellinus)*

The classification and identification of this group are at present highly speculative and many individuals cannot yet be identified to the species level. Expedition members took high-quality photos of several birds that will form the basis of an article in an appropriate journal.

**Chinese (Isabelline) Shrike** *Lanius (isabellinus) arenarius*

A-team: 1 Jerablus, low scrub on eastern side (10.1)

B-team: 1 Mheimideh (17.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 1 probably an adult male, oxbow W13 (18.2); 3 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 3 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2)

Assessment of status: probably a winter visitor in small numbers to the lower Euphrates valley

C-team members identified Isabelline Shrikes using the article by Worfolk (Worfolk 2000); only pale birds with pale lores, pale primaries and pale rufous tail were tentatively identified as possible *arenarius*.

Comment: the only Western Palearctic records of *arenarius* are from Iraq.

**Turkestan (Isabelline) Shrike** *Lanius (isabellinus) phoenicuroides*

A-team: 1 male, Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (16.1)

C-team: 1 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

Comment: these were pale individuals with (partly) dark lores and pale rufous tail, so were presumptively identified as *phoenicuroides*.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius (isabellinus) speculigerus/ arenarius/ phoenicuroides*

C-team: 1 Jabbul SE Lake, reedbed on southern shore (27.2)

Comment: this bird was seen at some distance, so several features, notably the loreal colour, could not be established.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*

C-team: 3 Talila reserve (23.2); 1 Hamad desert (25.2)

Assessment of status: hard to judge from these records as this particular habitat was little visited

Comments: these individuals probably belonged to subspecies *homeyeri*, which could be a scarce resident if the only habitat remaining is at Talila reserve (and possibly at desert flora reserves west of Palmyra); all other desert vegetation is heavily overgrazed.

**Steppe Grey Shrike** *Lanius (meridionalis) pallidirostris*

B-team: 1 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 1 first-winter, Talila reserve (23.2)

Assessment of status: the first record for Syria

Comment: this (sub)species winters in small numbers in southern Israel and may be a rare winter visitor to Syria.

**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

A-team: 100+ Lake Assad, western shore, roosting in reedbed (12.1); ~5000 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (dawn, 13.1); 5 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); 3 flocks of ~50000 – 100000 birds, flying downriver, Halabbiyah (late afternoon, 14.1); 20 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11 (15.11); al-Mustah salt fields (15.1)



B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, Dbeen Mosque (8.2); 10 Lake of Homs, south of Dbeen (8.2); Jabbul village (10.2); 200 Jabbul Dyke P13 (10.2); 50 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 500 Jabbul Dyke P10 (12.2); 20000 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 100 oxbow W20 (17.2)

C-team: 830 Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); 1 Lake Tishreen, north-eastern section (16.2); 16 Lake Tishreen – Harbar Karbira (16.2); 1500 Maskanali – al-Mansura (16.2); 1870 viewpoint W of ar-Raqqa (morning roost count, 17.2); 5083 ar-Raqqa – Zalabbiyah (18.2); 19 oxbow W23 (19.2); 21000 Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); 6 Deir ez-Zor – As-Shadade (21.2); 5 south-east of Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 255 Tal Brak ruins (21.2); 80 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 400 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: common and widespread in winter

### **Magpie** *Pica pica*

A-team: very common along the Euphrates from Ba'ath Lake downstream. Not recorded from Lake of Homs, Aleppo, Lake Tishreen or Lake Assad

B-team: 5 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 2 Ba'ath Lake P33 (15.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake P35 (15.2); 25 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2); 25 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 5 Mheimideh (17.2); 5 oxbow W27a (18.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor (20.2)

C-team: 2 singles Lake Tishreen (15.2); common along the Euphrates; 1 Jabbul (27.2). Not recorded elsewhere

Assessment of status: very common along the Euphrates valley but apparently rare or absent from Lake Assad northwards, anywhere further west than the Euphrates valley or in the north-east of Syria

### **Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

A-team: 60 Bab – Manbij (9.1); common, Manbij – Lake Tishreen (9.1); 300 Lake Tishreen, western side (9.1); 250 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (9.1); >500 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 200 Euphrates at ar-Raqqa (12.1); ~100 Huweijat Shnan R3 (14.1); 30 Mheimideh – Sur al-Kasrah (15.1); 80 riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11 (15.11); 1000 al-Mustah salt fields (15.1). Very under-recorded

B-team: 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 50 Lake Tishreen, northern end P16 (13.2); hundreds, Aleppo – Jerablus (13.2); 1000 oxbow W11 (16.2)

C-team: 6 flocks totalling 237 birds, Lake Tishreen (15.2); 692 Lake Tishreen – Maskanali (16.2); 40, flying north, Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); ~2500 ar-Raqqa – Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 al-Hasakah area (21.2)

Assessment of status: locally common in the Euphrates valley down to the Halabbiyah gorge and in the adjoining drier areas but apparently scarce or rare elsewhere

### **Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*

A-team: 50, with Rooks, Manbij – Lake Tishreen (9.1); flock of 300 Lake Tishreen, western side (9.1); >1000 roosting Jerablus (10.1); flock of >500 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); 1, in flock of Rooks, riverine forest above Halabbiyah R11 (15.11)

B-team: 1 Lake Tishreen, northern end P16 (13.2); 10 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P19 (13.2); 5 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2)

C-team: 5 flocks totalling 133, including a group of 40 *soemmeringii*, Lake Tishreen (15.2); 40 oxbow W1 (17.2)

Assessment of status: apparently a local bird in Syria, usually in flocks; common around Lake Tishreen but few records further down the Euphrates valley and no sightings S or W of the Euphrates

### Unidentified *Corvus* sp (Rook/Jackdaw)

A-team: distant flock of 5000 5 km south-east of Jerablus (dusk, 10.1)

### **Common Raven** *Corvus corax*

A-team: 1 pair cliff upstream of Halabbiyah (15.1)

C-team: 1 pair mountains north of Palmyra (26.2)

Assessment of status: appears now to be rare along the Euphrates

### **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis*

B-team: 1 Dawara cliff (20.2)

C-team: 1 over Bald Ibis roosting cliffs (22.2); 1 pair at nest, Mount Orh uplands, limestone cliff ~25 m high (26.2)

Assessment of status: uncommon in mountains N of Palmyra

### **Hooded Crow** *Corvus corone*

A-team: very few individual records. Common, Bab – Manbij (9.1)

B-team: Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); Lake Tishreen P19 (13.2); 50 Lake Assad P26 (14.2); 5 Euphrates near Madan Jadid (16.2); oxbow W11 (16.2); Mheimideh (17.2)

C-team: 22 Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); several sightings, Lake Tishreen (16.2); 2 ar-Raqqa (16.2); 300-500 from roost, viewpoint north-west of ar-Raqqa **P51** (17.2); oxbow W1 (17.2), Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); locally numerous, ar-Raqqa – Zalabbiyah (18.2); 1 oxbow W23 (19.2); oxbow W23 – Tell al-Zabary (19.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 1 as-Shadade – Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1 Deir ez-Zor – al-Shukhna (22.2); 1 Palmyra – Hama (27.2)  
Assessment of status: widely distributed

**Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

C-team: flock of 74 mountains north of Palmyra (27.2)

Assessment of status: very local in mountains surrounding Palmyra

Comment: reported by Baumgart *et al* (1995) to be extinct in Syria

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

A-team: not individually recorded

B-team: Jabbul village (10.2); Mheimideh (17.2). Under-recorded

C-team: 100 Aleppo – Lake Tishreen, Karakozak bridge (15.2); Lake Tishreen, north-eastern section (16.2); ar-Raqqa – oxbow W1 (17.2); Mheimideh (19.2), oxbow W23 (19.2), Tell al-Zabary (19.2); Deir ez-Zor – al-Ashara (20.2); Deir ez-Zor – Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 1, Hamad desert (24.2); Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: very common and widespread round human habitations

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*

A-team: Damascus-Palmyra road 10 km south of Palmyra (6.1); 10 Huweijjat Shnan R3 (14.1); 2 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (16.1); 10 Badia south of Palmyra (17.1)

B-team: Jabbul village (10.2); 18 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2); 10 Lake Assad **P28** (14.2); 15 Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 100 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 20 Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); 1 oxbow W27a (18.2); 25 Halabbiyah (19.2); 5 Euphrates north of Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 190 Harbar Karbira – al-Mansura (16.2); 41 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 130 ar-Raqqa – Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 40 Deir ez-Zor – Mheimideh (19.2); 30 Mheimideh (19.2); 30 Tell al-Zabary (19.2); 30 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 50 Gharanij floodplain W31-32 (20.2); 20 as-Shadade – Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 70 Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saeed (22.2); 8 Hamad desert (25.2); 4 south-east of Palmyra (25.2); 5 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in many different habitats in winter

Comment: the much greater numbers in February indicate that many late winter records relate to migrants

**Dead Sea Sparrow** *Passer moabiticus*

A-team: 8 Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); 3 flocks (with ~10 birds in each) Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1)

B-team: 70 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2)

C-team: 17 Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 3 oxbow W23 (19.2); 5 Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 2 Deir ez-Zor, palm garden next to Hotel al-Saeed (22.2); 20 Jabbul SE Lake (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but scarce in winter, usually near water

Comment: the greater numbers in February suggests that some records may relate to migrants

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

A-team: 1 in weedy field with Reed Buntings, Euphrates north of Lake Tishreen (10.1)

C-team: 6 Lake Tishreen, eastern side (15.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter; possibly localised to the upper Euphrates valley

**Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia*

B-team: 10 Lake Tishreen, south-western side **P20** (13.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter in the habitats visited by the Expedition

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

A-team: stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 2 flocks Manbij – Lake Tishreen (9.1); Euphrates north of Lake Tishreen (10.1); 20 Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 2 Lake Assad, southern shore (12.1); Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); Ba'ath Lake, southern side (12.1); Lake Assad, Qalaat Jaaber (12.1); Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); common, Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); Halabbiyah gorge (14.1); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1); Euphrates wood at W22 (16.1); Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, east of Moudan (9.2); 1 Jabbul village (10.2); 2 Jabbul Central Sector, **P8** (12.2); 5 Lake Assad **P26** (14.2); 50 Lake Assad **P28** (14.2); 15 Ba'ath Lake **P35** (15.2); 1 Ba'ath Lake **P36** (15.2); 5 Euphrates near Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (16.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 25 Halabbiyah (19.2)

C-team: 1, Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); 4 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 10 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 1 viewpoint north-west of ar-Raqqa (17.2); 1 oxbow W1 (17.2); 48 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); as-Sabkha oxbow W3 (17.2); 50 Euphrates P84 (18.2); 4 oxbow W23 (19.2)

Assessment of status: very common in a variety of habitats in winter

Comment: there appear to be fewer in late February, suggesting that many birds have already left

#### **Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*

A-team: 2 stream below Lake of Homs (7.1); 1 Buhayrat al-Laha (8.1); 5 Lake Assad, Qalaat Jaaber (12.1); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1)

B-team: Jabbul village (10.2); Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (17.2)

C-team: 5 Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); Lake Tishreen – Manbij (16.2); 10 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2)

Assessment of status: widespread but uncommon in winter in the habitats visited by the Expedition

#### **Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

A-team: <10 Lake of Homs, western shore (8.1); flock of 30 Lake Tishreen, western shore (9.1)

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, north-western corner, chicken farm P91 (9.2)

Assessment of status: very uncommon in winter in the habitats visited by the Expedition

#### **Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*

A-team: 1, flying over calling, Deir ez-Zor, footbridge (16.1)

Assessment of status: rare in winter in the habitats visited by the Expedition

#### **Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*

A-team: Damascus-Palmyra road 10 km south of Palmyra (6.1); >10000 roosting in reedbed, Sed Wadi Abied (6.1); 2 Lake of Homs, western side (8.1); 5 Lake Assad, Qalaat Jaaber (12.1); <10 Mheimideh (15.1); al-Mustah salt fields (15.1); Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 1 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2); 25 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 50 Lake Tishreen, south-western side P20 (13.2)

C-team: 1 Aleppo – Manbij (15.2); 10 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 3 Lower Khabur reservoir (21.2); 8 Palmyra ruins (25.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter

Comment: mainly found in habitats poorly covered by the Expedition. The huge roost at Sed Wadi Abied suggests that Linnets are relatively common in the right habitats.

#### **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

A-team: 1 Damascus – Palmyra (6.1); 10 Mheimideh (15.1)

B-team: 1 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 8 Jabbul Dyke P12 (10.2); 1 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P5 (11.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 20 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); 2 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 40 Harbar Karbira – Maskanali (16.2); 8 Talila reserve (23.2); 1 Palmyra – Hamad desert (24.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter

Comment: mainly found in habitats poorly covered by the Expedition

#### **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus*

B-team: 1 'Griffon cliff' (20.2)

C-team: 1 pair, with male singing, Hamad desert south of Palmyra (25.2); heard singing, Mount Orh uplands (26.2)

Assessment of status: local in late winter

Comment: mainly found in habitats poorly covered by the Expedition. These records may refer to residents, migrants or summer visitors.

#### **Serin** *Serinus serinus*

A-team: 1 Manbij – Lake Tishreen (9.1); 1, Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1)

B-team: 10 Lake of Homs, southern shore (8.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter

#### **Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra*

A-team: Damascus-Palmyra road 10 km south of Palmyra (6.1); 1 Manbij – Lake Tishreen (9.1); 100 Lake Tishreen, western side (9.1); Lake Tishreen, northern end (10.1); 20 ar-Raqqa – Ba'ath Lake (11.1); very common, fields at Sukkarya, south of Lake Assad (12.1); thousands roosting in reeds, Lake Assad, western shore (12.1); <10 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1); Mheimideh – Sur al-Kasrah (15.1); <10 Sur al-Kasrah oxbow W15 (15.1); Abu Hammam W30-32 (16.1). Very under-recorded

B-team: Jabbul village (10.2); Jabbul SE Lake P4 (11.2); 1 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 30 Lake Tishreen, south-western side, Bagirsak inlet (13.2); 40 Lake Assad P28 (14.2); >2 oxbow W11 (16.2); 10 Talila reserve (21.2)

C-team: 446 Aleppo – Manbij; 13 Lake Tishreen, Karakozak bridge (15.2); 400-600 Lake Tishreen – Harbar Karbira (with the surrounding fields covered in snow) (16.2); 40 ar-Raqqa – Jdeda oxbow W6 (18.2); 1 oxbow W14 – Zalabbiyah (18.2); 39 Tell al-Zabary ruins (19.2); 10 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); ~100 Deir ez-Zor – as-Shadade (21.2); 1 near al-Hasakah (21.2); Tal Brak ruins (21.2); 15 Hamad desert (25.2); 2 mountains east of Palmyra (26.2); 3 Palmyra – Hama (27.2); Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: very common in winter, particularly in the north. Several birds heard in song near Manbij

Comments: some birds may be winter visitors from Turkey or further north.

#### **Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia*

B-team: 5 Ba'ath Lake P36 (15.2)

Assessment of status: rare in winter in the habitats visited by the Expedition

#### **Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

A-team: 30 Euphrates above Lake Tishreen (10.1); 40+ Ba'ath Lake, northern side (11.1); 2 Lake Assad, south-eastern corner (12.1); >40 Ba'ath Lake, railway embankment (13.1); 2 Shnan oxbow W2 (14.1); Madan Jadid oxbow W10 (14.1). Under-recorded

B-team: 2 Jabbul Dyke P10 (10.2); 10 Jabbul Dyke P11 (10.2); 2 Jabbul SE Lake, southern shore P6 (11.2); 2 Jabbul Central Sector, P8 (12.2); 1 Lake Tishreen P19 (13.2); 4 Euphrates near Madan Jadid (16.2); 2 Mheimideh (17.2); 2 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (18.2)

C-team: 8 Lake Tishreen (15.2); 1 Shnan oxbow W2 (17.2); 2 oxbow W13 (18.2); 5 al-Ashara oxbow W28 (20.2); 3 Jabbul (27.2)

Assessment of status: widespread in winter, usually in small numbers

Comment: hard to assess true numbers as no roost counts were made

## **Results, Section 4 - Conservation Issues, notably evidence of hunting**

### **Sabkhat al-Jabbul (IBA 006)**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

B-team members observed hunters on the dyke between NW and Central Sectors. C-team members did not see any hunters or find any empty cartridges but their visit was relatively brief.

#### **Information gathered**

Local people blamed the government for not allowing them to shoot the pelicans, egrets and cormorants that were eating their fish. A large chemical works may soon be built on the northern shore, a potentially disastrous development for the site, which is a Ramsar site and therefore should be legally protected.

### **Lake Assad (IBA 007)**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

A-team members watched hunters firing in the south-east of the Lake (at the base of the causeway leading to the Island reserve). That evening, they met 3 hunters at the western end of the lake who had shot 3 Pochard; while they were there, a refrigerated van arrived to take the ducks away, for which the hunters were well paid.

#### **Information gathered**

There is a considerable trade for the Lebanese market.  
Hunters said that geese are very wary and very difficult to shoot.

### **Ba'ath Lake (IBA 008)**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

The area round the dam is densely populated; A-team members were told that relatively little shooting takes place but at least one hunter was at work and several used cartridges were found. The wet marshes are heavily grazed and the cattle enter the reeds.

B-team members saw two hunters shooting and collecting Starlings.

#### **Information gathered**

Local people do not like to eat birds and shooting pressure is less.  
Bycatch from fishing occurs.

### **Lake Tishreen (part of IBA 010)**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

A-team members heard firing at the Karakozak bridge and met hunters at the northern end of the lake. They met some fishermen who had caught 3 Coot as bycatch in monofilament nets; for religious reasons, the Coot could not be eaten.

B-team members saw a fisherman shoot a Coot for dinner. They heard much firing in the distance, possibly because it was a Friday.

C-team members saw a hunter at dusk on Jerablus new bridge shooting unsuccessfully at Cormorant and Pied Kingfisher.

#### **Information gathered**

There is heavy hunting at the Karakozak road bridge by Lebanese, visitors from Aleppo and local people. Some shooting takes place at the northern end of the lake but not so much as at Karakozak.

### **Euphrates valley below ar-Raqqa (part of IBA 010)**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

A-team members saw hunters in action at Madan Jadid oxbow W10, Huweijat Shnan R3, Mheimideh and Abu Hammam W30-32; they found discarded cartridges on the ground at Mheimideh.

At Mheimideh, C-team members saw a boy carrying around a live male Teal that had probably been snared; several boys made shooting gestures when they were looking at birds through telescopes. A man at Mheimideh told C-team members that he had chased away boys firing at birds on a number of occasions.

Drainage was taking place at several sites, for instance the oxbows at Shnan W2 and W23, and was already complete at as-Sabkha oxbow W3.

#### **Information gathered**

At a snack bar in Madan Jadid, the waiter told A-team members that he liked to eat both species of cormorants.

At al-Mustah salt fields, a local person said that birds were not shot as they did not like to eat them. Villagers at Mheimideh told members of the C-team that they wanted the site drained.

### **Buhayrat al-Laha (IBA 016)**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

A-team members noted that the litter along the shoreline was appalling.

### **Lake of Homs (IBA 017)**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

A-team members saw at least 30 hunters, particularly at the western end, including some in waders well out into the lake; they met a police patrol at the north-eastern corner who stated that they were checking hunting licences. At least 2 boats with hunters were causing considerable disturbance to duck flocks at the western end. They found the wing-feathers of a long-dead White Pelican on the western shore.

B-team members saw a few fishing boats out on the lake but no hunters and just a few discarded cartridges along the southern shore. There were large flocks of waterfowl, keeping to the central parts of the lake.

#### **Information gathered**

150 hunters are often present at one time, many of them Lebanese; shooting is highly successful.

Any bird is shot, including egrets.

Much lamping by boat occurs at night, when birds are easy to shoot.

Birds are often sold for food for the Lebanese market.

Bycatch from monofilament nets also occurs.

### **Sed Wadi Abied**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

A-team members found used cartridges and discarded cartridge boxes near the lake.

### **al-Shukhna Dam**

#### **Observations made by Expedition members**

B-team members saw a family having a Friday picnic; the husband showed off his rifle. When 48 Ruddy Shelduck flew in, he was about to shoot them but the B-team members successfully chased the birds away.

### **Palmyra area**

#### **Information gathered**

When C-team members were searching for Great Bustard in the mountains north of Palmyra, they asked local shepherds about them. Several times each winter, Kuwaitis apparently come to hunt them with guns and falcons. Decades ago, several hundred Great Bustard wintered in the area, but recently there have been much smaller numbers of no more than 15 birds.

## **Results, Section 5 - Gifts and donations made**

C-team members donated pairs of binoculars to Ahmed Abdallah and Mahmoud Abdallah and three small spotting scopes to Ahmed Abdallah, Mahmoud Abdallah and Adeeb al-Asaad. The Dutch Birding Association donated promotional T-shirts and caps to Ahmed Abdallah, Mahmoud Abdallah, Adeeb al-Asaad and Gianluca Serra. Richard Hurst donated a telescope and Mike Evans a field guide. CW and DM brought three pairs of binoculars and a tripod. The funds from Chester Zoo were used to buy 12 copies of identification guides. Expedition members donated guides to Mr. Yaseen, guard at Jabbul, Mr Mohammed al-Sageer, director of the conservation NGO in ar-Raqqa, and Mr. Mohammed Said Naffous, Director of Environment in Aleppo.

# Summary and Recommendations

## Achievement of Aims

This is an assessment of whether the expedition's aims were achieved.

### 1. To improve knowledge of Syria's wetland birds, particularly of species threatened on a global scale

#### 1a. Making counts of significant winter visitors, particularly wildfowl, waders and raptors

There are very few previous data on Syria's wintering avifauna (Baumgart *et al* 1995). The waterbirds counted during the Expedition, summarised in Table 1 (pages 108 and 109), highlight Syria's importance for wintering wetland birds. In particular, significant numbers of Pygmy Cormorants, Greater Flamingos, Common Shelducks, White-headed Ducks, Ferruginous Ducks, Greater Spotted Eagles and Coots were found. The counts were always as thorough and as accurate as possible.

#### 1b. Making observations of the distribution of resident species and documenting fully records of globally important populations

Records from the Expedition are presented in the species list (page 68). The 'Assessments of Status' often differ radically from the only previous summary of the Syrian avifauna (Baumgart *et al* 1995). We hope that these observations and assessments will be of assistance to the Syrian government, conservation organisations and zoogeographers. In particular, eight 'Red Data Book' species (BirdLife International 2000) were recorded, observations of which are discussed more fully below.

Expedition members made observations of Iraq Babbler at Lake Tishreen and Sabkhat al-Jabbul that constitute major range extensions. Several species were potentially recorded, as far as we know, for the first time in Syria; these included Smew *Mergellus albellus*, Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus*, Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia (nana) nana*, Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* and Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius (meridionalis) pallidirostris*. There were several well-documented observations of Isabelline Shrikes, some of which showed characteristics of Chinese Shrike *Lanius (isabellinus) arenarius*. Full reports of these observations are being prepared for publication.

To support our observations, each team took large numbers of photographs, now archived with OSME, Birdlife International and other supporting organisations. The GPS data have been used to construct maps of sites of major importance; these have also been archived. Many of the sites visited are difficult to access and lack adequate maps; the Expedition's maps will help to make access much easier for future conservationists and visitors.

### Records of 'Red Data Book' species

#### Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

Observations from the Expedition: widespread throughout the Euphrates valley wherever suitable habitat was present, notably the reedbeds fringing the river and in oxbows. Very common at Lake Tishreen. Not recorded from Lake of Homs or Sabkhat al-Jabbul.

Syrian wintering status: as above

International status: Near Threatened, with an estimated world population of about 25000 pairs (BirdLife International 2000).

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- habitat conservation, particularly of oxbows along the Euphrates river, a favourite habitat that is rapidly being drained for agriculture
- protection from hunting and fishing bycatch
- a comprehensive breeding season survey to inform and direct conservation activities

Comments: stated by Baumgart *et al* (1995) to be 'a rare visitor'. The wintering population at Lake Tishreen is of international significance. A al-Asaad and DA Murdoch saw over 2500 Pygmy Cormorants in a brief visit to Lake Tishreen in May 2005.

**Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus*

Observations from the Expedition: a single individual at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

Syrian wintering status: vagrant or rare winter visitor

International status: Conservation Dependent (BirdLife International 2000)

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- conservation of large open wetlands, notably Sabkhat al-Jabbul
- protection from hunting

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*

Observations from the Expedition: recorded from many sites along the Euphrates; particularly common in secluded, well-vegetated shallow pools and at Lake Tishreen. Also recorded from Sabkhat al-Jabbul and Sed Wadi Abied.

Syrian wintering status: relatively common throughout the Syrian Euphrates and at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

International status: Near Threatened (BirdLife International 2000)

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- habitat conservation, particularly of the Euphrates oxbows, as for Pygmy Cormorant (above)
- protection from hunting. The A-team noted hunters in the reeds at the northern end of Lake Tishreen
- a comprehensive breeding season survey to inform and direct conservation activities

Comments: Lake Tishreen may hold an internationally significant wintering population.

A al-Asaad and DA Murdoch saw over 200 Ferruginous Ducks in a brief visit to Sabkhat al-Jabbul in May 2005, and a smaller number at Lake Tishreen. The behaviour of the ducks strongly indicated breeding.

**Marbled Teal** *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

Observations from the Expedition: the only record was of four at Mheimideh on 19 February

Syrian wintering status: this record may relate to wintering individuals, early migrants or summer visitors

International status: Vulnerable, with an estimated world population of 10000-20000 (BirdLife International 2000)

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- habitat conservation of the Euphrates oxbows as for Pygmy Cormorant (above). In particular, it breeds at Mheimideh, a site that deserves reserve status and full protection (Murdoch 2003)
- protection from hunting
- a comprehensive breeding season survey to inform and direct conservation activities

Comment: A al-Asaad and DA Murdoch saw over 200 Marbled Teal in a brief visit to Sabkhat al-Jabbul in May 2005; the behaviour of the ducks strongly indicated breeding.

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala*

Observations from the Expedition: recorded in small numbers from three sites:

- At Lake of Homs, the maximum count was of 11 birds
- At Sabkhat al-Jabbul, the maximum count was of 9 birds
- At Mheimideh, the maximum count was of 23 birds

Syrian status: winter visitor in variable numbers to Lake of Homs and Sabkhat al-Jabbul; possibly present throughout the year at Mheimideh, where it has recently been proved to breed (Murdoch 2003).

International status: Endangered, with an estimated world population of 2500–10000 (BirdLife International 2000)

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- habitat conservation, particularly of Sabkhat al-Jabbul and Mheimideh
- an urgent and comprehensive breeding season survey to inform and direct conservation activities
- protection from hunting, particularly at Lake of Homs; it may have declined significantly here since the 1970s, when counts of over 100 were made (MacFarlane 1978)
- regular censuses (throughout a winter and from year-to-year) at these sites to improve the inadequate data base

Comments: it is likely to be much commoner at Sabkhat al-Jabbul than the above records indicate. G Serra counted 170 on the SE Lake in February 2003 (G Serra pers comm), and R Porter and D Scott recorded 725 in the NW Sector on 25 January 2005, much the largest count of this species in



Syria and probably 5-10% of the world population. These observations indicate that Sabkhat al-Jabbul may be one of the most important wintering sites for White-headed Duck in the world. The fluctuations in numbers could have several explanations; the Sabkhat is vast, or it may be that this population is highly mobile, visiting other sites yet to be discovered. A al-Asaad and DA Murdoch paid a brief visit in May 2005, recording at least 25 White-headed Ducks. There is therefore likely to be a substantial breeding population at Sabkhat al-Jabbul.

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*

Observations from the Expedition: 16 observations, mainly in February

Syrian wintering status: scarce in winter; some February records may refer to early migrants

International status: Near Threatened, with an estimated world population of 20000 pairs (BirdLife International 2000)

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- protection from hunting

Comments: habitat conservation would appear to be less of an issue at present as this is a steppe species.

**Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*

Observations from the Expedition: about 18 sightings from seven sites distributed along the entire Syrian Euphrates, with one individual at Sabkhat al-Jabbul

Syrian wintering status: widespread along the Syrian Euphrates, particularly in Huweijjat woods bordering the river

International status: Vulnerable, with an estimated world population of 2500–10000 individuals (BirdLife International 2000)

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- habitat conservation, particularly of Huweijjat woods
- protection from hunting

**Sociable Plover** *Vanellus gregarius*

Observations from the Expedition: three February records of a total of eight birds, from Lake of Homs (1), Talila (4) and the north-east (3)

Syrian wintering status: probably a rare winter visitor, but the size of the wintering population is unknown

International status: classified in 2000 as Vulnerable (Birdlife International 2000), with an estimated adult population of less than 10000 individuals. Recent evidence of massive declines resulted in 2004 in an upgrade to Critically Endangered status (Birdlife International 2004); the latest population estimate is of 600 to 1800 individuals, which is thought to be rapidly decreasing. Comments: there are few previous records from Syria. Small numbers were seen at Talila reserve in February 2000, March 2002 and March 2003. As Sociable Plover does not leave neighbouring countries until late March, it is likely that at least small numbers winter in Syria. Expedition members conducted searches specifically for this species but these inevitably could not be comprehensive within the time available; there are vast tracts of apparently suitable arable land in the north and large open areas in the southern desert. Syria may hold internationally important wintering populations of this Critically Endangered species.

Recommendations for conservation in Syria:

- protection from hunting, particularly at Lake of Homs
- habitat loss in winter quarters is likely to be less of a threat than for other species of conservation concern; there are huge areas of steppe with little human disturbance that this species can utilise.

A second winter expedition, specifically to search for wintering flocks of Sociable Plover on the Syrian steppes, would be well justified.

## 1c. Identifying areas of conservation value

### Assessment of coverage (Table 9)

The weather during the Expedition was unusually bad by Syrian standards; this had a significant impact on coverage.

**Sabkhat al-Jabbul (IBA 006):** the site is vast (provisionally 260 sq km) and access is often difficult, particularly for the Central Sector. A census would be a formidable undertaking but the

site is potentially threatened and is so important that a comprehensive survey should be attempted as a matter of urgency.

**Lake Assad (IBA 007):** snow storms made it impossible for both B- and C-teams to reach the northern side of this huge reservoir. The steep slopes make access difficult round most of the lake but also make it less attractive to waterfowl.

**Ba'ath Lake (BA 008):** well covered; again a snow storm made one visit less thorough than planned.

#### **Euphrates valley (IBA 010)**

**Lake Tishreen:** the northern half upstream from the Karakozak bridge was comprehensively surveyed but snow storms prevented assessment of the southern half downstream from the bridge. Satellite maps indicate that the southern half has very steep sides, few villages and few access roads. It may therefore be of less interest to waterfowl but less disturbed by humans.

The **Euphrates river** itself was usually inaccessible but at least 14 points on the river was sampled. Of the **oxbows**, the larger were all visited as well as the majority of the smaller sites.

**Buhayrat al-Laha (IBA 016)** and **Lake of Homs (IBA 017)** were thoroughly surveyed.

Expedition members visited several previously unknown wetlands, notably the **Upper Khabur reservoir** (thoroughly covered) and the **Lower Khabur reservoir** (a large site only superficially sampled).

In the central Syrian desert, **Sed Wadi Abied** and **Sabkhat al-Muh** (both part of **IBA 018**) and **al-Shukhna reservoir** were all thoroughly counted.

Recent observations (D A Murdoch, pers obs, May 2005) indicate that the Ghab (the valley of the Asir) has been comprehensively drained; the only remaining area of habitat on its western side, some small fishponds, was patrolled by a hunter with instructions to shoot any waterfowl that might eat fish. There were some water bodies on the eastern side of the Ghab close to large villages. A mountain reservoir at Midanji was large but steep-sided and birdless. Some reservoirs inland from Lattakeia were visible from Slenfe.

In summary, the majority of the promising wetlands in Syria were surveyed or at least sampled, with reasonably comprehensive counts made for many sites. Most of the areas that were not visited, notably the southern half of Lake Tishreen and the northern shore of Lake Assad, appear from satellite maps to be less interesting for waterfowl. The Expedition therefore achieved satisfactory coverage of Syria's wetlands.

#### **Recommendations for new IBAs**

Syria has several large water bodies of international significance; these include Lake of Homs, Lake Assad, Ba'ath Lake, and Lake Tishreen, and, above all, Sabkhat al-Jabbul. Observations from several smaller sites along the lower Euphrates valley indicate that the oxbows and quiet backwaters of the undammed (southern) parts of the river are collectively of great importance (Tables 6, 7 and 9); the valley as a whole is likely to hold large wintering populations of thinly distributed species such as Pygmy Cormorant and Ferruginous Duck.

Further, Syria is in a geographical position of great importance along the Asian-African landbridge. The wetlands visited during the Expedition act as vital havens for huge numbers of migrants – water birds, raptors, passerines – as they run the gauntlet of hostile terrain and hunters' guns. Their importance is enhanced by the desert that stretches south unbroken from central Syria to the Indian Ocean. Because of their geographical position relative to the desert, the lower Euphrates valley and the small wetlands round Palmyra assume greater strategic significance.

On the basis of our observations, we recommend (Table 11) that **Sed Wadi Abied** and **Lower Khabur reservoir** be given IBA status, as well as several individual sites along the Euphrates valley (IBA 010): **Lake Tishreen**; the **Shnan** area; the **Halabbiyah gorge/riverine woods/al-Mustah salt fields** area; and **Mheimideh**.

## **2. To encourage study and conservation of wildlife in Syria**

### **2a. Forming links with Syrian nationals, training them in conservation techniques and supplying them with relevant equipment and information**

**Training Syrian members of the Expedition.** This was a key aim of the Expedition, by expanding their skills in ecology and nature conservation and by improving their proficiency as ecoguides. Their expertise in field identification was broadened by exposure to a range of species not encountered in the deserts round Palmyra, and they were encouraged to develop their skills in groups such as ducks, pipits and finches. Expedition members discussed the significance of individual sites and ecosystems to enable the Syrian members to recognize important areas and to improve their conservation skills. Finally, we discussed what foreign visitors might expect of ecotourist guides in terms of transport, hotels, restaurants and time spent in the field. We feel that, when ecotourism develops in Syria, they will be well placed to assist foreign visitors. We are confident that they will eventually form the nucleus of a Syrian conservation field force, leading censuses and developing nature conservation at grassroots level.

We were extremely grateful to Mr. Osama al-Nouri for his interest and support for the Expedition; without his 4x4 wheel drive (4WD) cars, many important sites would have been inaccessible. We believe that his close involvement in the Syrian Society for Conservation of Wildlife (SSCW) is of great importance for the development of a nature conservation movement in Syria.

**Education of the Syrian people about wildlife conservation.** This task is of critical importance but has been grossly neglected. It was clear that other Syrians are seriously interested in wildlife and nature conservation. An example was Mr. Imad Dahman at Jabbul, whose advice on how to survey Sabkhat al-Jabbul was much appreciated. When we showed onlookers birds through our optical equipment, there was often intense interest. So we believe that it is deeply regrettable that the Western conservation movement has found no way to harness the latent interest shown by many ordinary Syrians in wildlife. Wild animals do not observe political boundaries; it is in the interests of Western conservationists that a strong conservation movement develops in Syria, to conserve habitats and to restrict hunting.

Two major steps forward would be:

1. To develop accessible nature reserves close to population centres where Syrian nationals, particularly schoolchildren, can watch and enjoy a wide variety of attractive birds. Three sites that would fit many of the relevant criteria would be Sabkhat al-Jabbul, Ba'ath Lake and Mheimideh;
2. To translate ornithological literature into Arabic. The range of literature needed extends from identification handbooks to free handouts. The lack of a good identification handbook in Arabic is a major obstacle to the development of a core group of experienced Syrian naturalists competent in field ornithology. Simple handouts with high-quality photographs would be invaluable for birders to give to interested Syrians met in the field; there is a real latent interest in nature in the villages that is not being harnessed. It is an important challenge for Western conservation organisations to meet.

**Development of ecotourism.** One route is to encourage ecotourism to Syria, a country with much to offer and a well-developed infrastructure with which to present it; this would directly assist the Syrian members of the expedition and increase the Government's interest in wildlife conservation. Sadly, for political reasons, this is not an encouraging time for ecotourism in the Middle East. However, neighbouring countries such as Turkey and Israel have varying degrees of political stability, yet, in a relatively short time, they have developed an ecotourism industry. We believe that Syria, with its rich culture and birdlife, has great potential for ecotourism and we hope that the translation of this report into Arabic will contribute to its development.

A site of outstanding international importance is the Northern Bald Ibis colony near Palmyra. Though steppe habitat was strictly outside the remit of this Expedition, the Bald Ibis is such a charismatic 'flagship species' for Syrian conservation that every effort must be made to save this relict colony from extinction. The site has exceptional potential for ecotourism, for both Syrian nationals and foreign tourists, giving them an opportunity to experience a healthy and extremely beautiful ecosystem, to the benefit of the wildlife and the local population.

## **2b. Documenting threats to wildlife and habitats, in particular hunting pressure**

As well as recording wildlife, Expedition members made other observations relevant to nature conservation in Syria.

We were particularly anxious to assess the threat posed by hunting, which is very heavy in some parts of the Middle East but is banned by law in Syria (Evans 1994). The consensus among Expedition members was that hunting occurred widely but hunting pressure rarely appeared to be excessive when Expedition members were present. However, it is probably more intensive on holidays, at other times of year and for certain species. Many more observations are required to make a more accurate assessment of the problem. Opinions differed markedly between teams about certain sites, notably Lake of Homs and the western edge of Lake Assad, where we gathered good evidence that duck shooting is an economic activity. It was very encouraging that when we were given an audience with Mr. Faisal Qasim, Governor of the Province of ar-Raqqa, we were able to express our concerns about the hunting problem, and he took swift action to enforce the relevant laws.

Habitat loss is inevitably a major concern in any country with a rapidly increasing population. The huge dams that have flooded the upper Euphrates valley must have had a mixed effect on wildlife. Our data show that the reservoirs probably hold internationally significant numbers of several species of water birds, the habitat for which would not have been present before their construction in the last forty years. But almost none of the upper Euphrates river now remains, a matter of great concern for wildlife that depends on a riverine environment, for instance the Turtle *Trionyx euphraticus*. Further downstream, there are still significant areas of 'Huweijat' (the woods bordering the Euphrates), river edge and reedbed. These habitats are difficult to access and were relatively poorly covered by the Expedition; they are likely to provide sanctuary and feeding opportunities for huge numbers of migrants, as well as for wintering species such as Greater Spotted Eagle. It is difficult to assess in a brief expedition the threats to the river itself, but at one site Expedition members were told that Huweijat were protected from felling by law.

Of greater concern, we found clear evidence that many oxbows along the river are being drained for agriculture – a process noted at W3, W13, W23 and the Gharanij floodplain (W31-33). The fate of Gharanij is a salutary lesson; even when the soil is highly saline, population pressure is driving drainage schemes, and a site that once must have held substantial flocks of Flamingos (whence its name) has lost most of its wildlife interest and is rapidly being replaced by houses. This is not always the case – the 'al Mustah salt fields', just upstream of the Halabbiyah gorge, are too salty to farm and the site holds nationally important numbers of waders and duck. However, there must be considerable pressure to drain small oxbows. The loss of a site such as Mheimideh, a gem with enormous potential as a 'flagship reserve', would be disastrous.

The most important wetland in Syria appears to be Sabkhat al-Jabbul, which enjoys Ramsar Convention status. Though there are few data, it appears that agricultural run-off has greatly increased the area of standing water and has led to the development of vast lakes varying between brackish and freshwater – a mosaic enhancing its value. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this enormous and strategically sited wetland; more than any other site in Syria, it deserves strict protection. It is therefore of great concern to hear of possible plans to develop a chemicals factory on its southern shore. We strongly urge conservation bodies to express their grave concerns about the threat to this internationally important wetland. We recommend an urgent, comprehensive census of its avifauna and development of clear plans for its conservation.

**Table 1**  
**Total numbers of waterbird species recorded, Syrian Wetland Expedition,**  
**January-February 2004**

<b>Species</b>	<b>A-Team</b>	<b>B-Team</b>	<b>C-Team</b>
<b>Little Grebe</b> <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	662	319	424
<b>Black-necked Grebe</b> <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	1780	1015	83
<b>Great Crested Grebe</b> <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	221	840	56
<b>Cormorant</b> <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	2086	1076	1046
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b> <i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i>	499	421	2210
<b>White Pelican</b> <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	0	14	9
<b>Dalmatian Pelican</b> <i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	0	0	1
<b>Unidentified Pelican</b> <i>Pelecanus</i> sp	0	8	0
<b>Bittern</b> <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	10	8	8
<b>Little Bittern</b> <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	1	0	1
<b>Night Heron</b> <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	168	323	338
<b>Squacco Heron</b> <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	1	1	0
<b>Cattle Egret</b> <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	27	28	0
<b>Little Egret</b> <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	373	119	132
<b>Great White Egret</b> <i>Ardea alba</i>	211	472	242
<b>Grey Heron</b> <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	167	520	136
<b>Eurasian Spoonbill</b> <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	0	68	8
<b>Greater Flamingo</b> <i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	0	12686	9801
<b>White-fronted Goose</b> <i>Anser albifrons</i>	152	6000	9907
<b>Greylag Goose</b> <i>Anser anser</i>	1	200	3
<b>Shelduck</b> <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	83	13434	NC
<b>Ruddy Shelduck</b> <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	12	90	20
<b>Wigeon</b> <i>Anas penelope</i>	559	1121	630
<b>Teal</b> <i>Anas crecca</i>	4255	2475	1156
<b>Gadwall</b> <i>Anas strepera</i>	306	196	34
<b>Mallard</b> <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	1173	620	574
<b>Pintail</b> <i>Anas acuta</i>	194	1030	172
<b>Garganey</b> <i>Anas querquedula</i>	0	4	0
<b>Shoveler</b> <i>Anas clypeata</i>	5979	1358	513
<b>Marbled Teal</b> <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	0	0	4
<b>Red-crested Pochard</b> <i>Netta rufina</i>	369	779	359
<b>Pochard</b> <i>Aythya ferina</i>	27830	25264	11449
<b>Ferruginous Duck</b> <i>Aythya nyroca</i>	703	179	287
<b>Tufted Duck</b> <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1237	1262	11
<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b> <i>Mergus serrator</i>	0	1	0
<b>Smew</b> <i>Mergellus albellus</i>	0	2	14
<b>White-headed Duck</b> <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	28	25	7
<b>Water Rail</b> <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	34	11	10
<b>Little Crane</b> <i>Porzana parva</i>	0	0	1
<b>Moorhen</b> <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	41	97	67
<b>Coot</b> <i>Fulica atra</i>	108040	135945	50058
<b>Purple Gallinule</b> <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	9	11	7
<b>Common Crane</b> <i>Grus grus</i>	0	45	52
<b>Avocet</b> <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	23	68	29

**Table 1 cont'd**  
**Total numbers of waterbird species recorded, Syrian Wetland Expedition,**  
**January-February 2004**

<b>Black-winged Stilt</b> <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	1	7	4
<b>Cream-coloured Courser</b> <i>Cursorius cursor</i>	0	0	4
<b>Ringed Plover</b> <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	19	66	31
<b>Kentish Plover</b> <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	13	223	53
<b>Greater Sand Plover</b> <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	0	0	10
<b>Golden Plover</b> <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	4	4	1
<b>Lapwing</b> <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	883	4821	1021
<b>Sociable Plover</b> <i>Vanellus gregarius</i>	0	5	3
<b>White-tailed Plover</b> <i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	7	37	60
<b>Spur-winged Plover</b> <i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	19	23	13
<b>Little Stint</b> <i>Calidris minuta</i>	162	2872	27
<b>Temminck's Stint</b> <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	0	18	1
<b>Dunlin</b> <i>Calidris alpina</i>	58	551	10
<b>Little Stint/Dunlin</b> <i>Calidris</i> sp	0	30	0
<b>Common Snipe</b> <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	297	57	90
<b>Jack Snipe</b> <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	1	0	2
<b>Spotted Redshank</b> <i>Tringa erythropus</i>	10	119	63
<b>Redshank</b> <i>Tringa totanus</i>	225	1355	88
<b>Marsh Sandpiper</b> <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	0	61	1
<b>Greenshank</b> <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	32	11	6
<b>Wood Sandpiper</b> <i>Tringa glareola</i>	1	0	0
<b>Green Sandpiper</b> <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	34	14	26
<b>Common Sandpiper</b> <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2	7	1
<b>Ruff</b> <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	109	28	86
<b>Black-tailed Godwit</b> <i>Limosa limosa</i>	164	131	5
<b>Eurasian Curlew</b> <i>Numenius arquatus</i>	19	43	1
<b>Little Gull</b> <i>Larus minutus</i>	5	0	0
<b>Black-headed Gull</b> <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	1750	7241	1739
<b>Mediterranean Gull</b> <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	0	0	1
<b>Slender-billed Gull</b> <i>Larus genei</i>	37	102	329
<b>Common Gull</b> <i>Larus canus</i>	0	16	5
<b>Great Black-headed Gull</b> <i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	28	36	40
<b>Caspian (Yellow-legged) Gull</b> <i>Larus cachinnans</i>	30	5	16
<b>Armenian Gull</b> <i>Larus armenicus</i>	130	146	718
<b>Armenian/Caspian (Yellow-legged) Gull</b> <i>Larus armenicus/cachinnans</i>	0	151	0
<b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b> <i>Larus fuscus</i>	0	0	1
<b>Gull-billed Tern</b> <i>Sterna nilotica</i>	0	1	0
<b>Whiskered Tern</b> <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	4205	1031	46

NC, not counted

Note: there is some overlap between the areas that each team counted, but these figures give an indication of relative abundance.

**Table 2**  
**Lake of Homs (IBA 017) counts, January 2004**

Species	Factory Site		Moudan estuary	Dbeen Mosque		Total
Co-ordinate		P99	P97	P94	P89-90	
Section of lake	SE end	S side	SW corner	W end	N shore	
Dates	7.1	7.1	7.1	8.1	8.1	
Little Grebe		2			10	<b>12</b>
Great Crested Grebe					4	<b>4</b>
Black-necked Grebe	1	2			5	<b>8</b>
Cormorant	2				10	<b>12</b>
Grey Heron	2		1			<b>3</b>
Great White Egret		4	1			<b>5</b>
Little Egret	210*		20		7	<b>237</b>
Cattle Egret		10	8		9	<b>27</b>
Wigeon		30		50	150	<b>230</b>
Gadwall	5					<b>5</b>
Mallard	50		NC		10	<b>&gt;60</b>
Pintail	5	10			1	<b>16</b>
Shoveler	4000+**		NC	500	1320	<b>5820+</b>
Pochard	350			500	3500	<b>4350</b>
Tufted Duck	250	100				<b>350</b>
White-headed Duck	7					<b>7</b>
Marsh Harrier			6	2		<b>8</b>
Hen Harrier			1			<b>1</b>
Long-legged Buzzard			1			<b>1</b>
Kestrel	1				3***	<b>4</b>
Water Rail		1				<b>1</b>
Coot		3000+	1000+	1500	350	<b>5850+</b>
Lapwing	16	40	40		4	<b>100</b>
Eurasian Curlew			1			<b>1</b>
Redshank			1			<b>1</b>
Wood Sandpiper			1			<b>1</b>
Green Sandpiper	1					<b>1</b>
Little Stint		100	15			<b>115</b>
Dunlin		50				<b>50</b>
Black-headed Gull	100	NC				<b>100+</b>
Slender-billed Gull		1				<b>1</b>
Little Gull		5				<b>5</b>
Whiskered Tern		200		50	60	<b>310</b>
Red-throated Pipit					3	<b>3</b>
Water Pipit			1			<b>1</b>

**Notes**

The appalling weather on 7.1 made counting very difficult or impossible at Moudan and Dbeen; the figures given are an under-estimate of the numbers of waterfowl present. Dbeen was re-counted on 8.1.

\* Flew west from roost at dawn.

\*\* Shoveler is the only species that was possibly over-counted. The 4000 present at the factory site at dawn on 7.1 appeared to be leaving a roost as they were seen dispersing west to other parts of the lake during the count.

\*\*\* Includes one melanistic Kestrel



**Table 3**  
**Lake Tishreen counts, January 2004**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Lake Tishreen</b>
<b>Dates</b>	<b>9.1, 10.1</b>
Little Grebe	78
Great Crested Grebe	25
Black-necked Grebe	370
Cormorant	1515
Pygmy Cormorant	240
Night Heron	120
Grey Heron	19
Squacco Heron	1
Great White Egret	4
Little Egret	57
Bittern	1
White-fronted Goose	14
Ruddy Shelduck	12
Wigeon	172
Gadwall	11
Mallard	273
Pintail	57
Shoveler	10
Red-crested Pochard	63
Pochard	16200
Ferruginous Duck	475
Tufted Duck	2
Marsh Harrier	120
Hen Harrier	10
Greater Spotted Eagle	1
Sparrowhawk	5
Kestrel	1
Peregrine	1
Merlin	2
Water Rail	20
Moorhen	70
Coot	64500
Lapwing	45
Ringed Plover	5
Black-tailed Godwit	13
Redshank	144
Greenshank	12
Green Sandpiper	18
Common Snipe	15
Little Stint	7
Dunlin	2
Ruff	5
Caspian/Armenian Gull	350
Great Black-headed Gull	3
Black-headed Gull	1500
Whiskered Tern	760
Common Kingfisher	41
Pied Kingfisher	33

**Table 4**  
**Ba'ath Lake (IBA 008) counts, January 2004**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Ba'ath Lake (N + E ends)</b>	<b>Railway embankment (S side)</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Dates</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>13.1</b>	
Little Grebe	396	8	<b>404</b>
Great Crested Grebe	71		<b>71</b>
Black-necked Grebe	625		<b>625</b>
Cormorant	250	22	<b>272</b>
Pygmy Cormorant	53	83	<b>136</b>
Night Heron	4		<b>4</b>
Little Egret	10		<b>10</b>
Great White Egret	5	4	<b>9</b>
Grey Heron	4		<b>4</b>
Bittern	1	3	<b>4</b>
Greylag Goose	1		<b>1</b>
Wigeon	3		<b>3</b>
Teal	735	15	<b>750</b>
Gadwall	23	38	<b>61</b>
Mallard	1	1	<b>2</b>
Pintail	4	2	<b>6</b>
Shoveler	45	1	<b>46</b>
Red-crested Pochard	285		<b>285</b>
Pochard	5100		<b>5100</b>
Ferruginous Duck	51		<b>51</b>
Tufted Duck	425		<b>425</b>
Marsh Harrier	28	10	<b>38</b>
Black Kite		1	<b>1</b>
Hen Harrier	4	3	<b>7</b>
Sparrowhawk	3	1	<b>4</b>
Kestrel		3	<b>3</b>
Merlin	3		<b>3</b>
Water Rail	10+	4+	<b>14+</b>
Moorhen	P		<b>P</b>
Coot	23500		<b>23500</b>
Lapwing		30	<b>30</b>
Common Snipe	162	75	<b>237</b>
Spotted Redshank	2		<b>2</b>
Redshank	7	7	<b>14</b>
Greenshank	1		<b>1</b>
Green Sandpiper		3	<b>3</b>
Great Black-headed Gull	6		<b>6</b>
Armenian Gull	P		<b>P</b>
Whiskered Tern	460+	40	<b>500+</b>
Slender-billed Gull		1	<b>1</b>
Common Kingfisher	4	3	<b>7</b>
Pied Kingfisher	11	3	<b>14</b>
Sand Martin	1		<b>1</b>
Fan-tailed Warbler	1		<b>1</b>
Bearded Tit	20+	heard at 2 sites	<b>20+</b>
Iraq Babbler		8	<b>8</b>
Starling		5000 (roost)	<b>5000</b>
Dead Sea Sparrow		30	<b>30</b>
Reed Bunting	40+	40+	<b>80+</b>

**Table 5**  
**Lake Assad (IBA 007) sample sites counts, January 2004**

Species	Causeway/ Island	Pumping stations	Conifer bay / Qalaat Jabber	Totals
Section of lake	SE corner	S + W sides	E end, N side	
Date	12.1	12.1	13.1	
Little Grebe	4	92		96
Great Crested Grebe	90	30	2	122
Black-necked Grebe	240	410	111	761
Cormorant	153	50		203
Pygmy Cormorant	2	43	2	47
Grey Heron	8	20		28
Great White Egret	60	120		180
Little Egret	36			36
Night Heron	1	26		27
Bittern		3		3
White-fronted Goose		140		140
Teal		45		45
Mallard	28	50		78
Shoveler		3		3
Red-crested Pochard	11	3		14
Pochard	130	720		850
Ferruginous Duck		25		25
Tufted Duck	250	190		440
Water Rail	1	2		3
Moorhen		P		
Coot	3150	6100	10	9260
Lapwing	1			1
Redshank		3		3
Greenshank	2	9		11
Common Snipe		2		2
Armenian Gull	P	10	1	11+
Caspian Gull	P	1	30	31+
Great Black-headed Gull	6			6
Black-headed Gull	30		P	30+
Slender-billed Gull	30		2	32
Whiskered Tern	5	2640		2645
Marsh Harrier	11	35	1	47
Hen Harrier		8		8
Pallid Harrier		2+		2+
Sparrowhawk	1	1		2
Kestrel	1	3		4
Merlin		2		2
Barn Owl		1		1
Pied Kingfisher	24	20		44
Common Kingfisher	2	2		4
Bearded Tit		Several heard		

**Table 6**  
**River Euphrates (IBA 010) North counts, January 2004**

Species	Shnan oxbow W2	Madan Jadid W10	Halabbiyah	Mheimideh W20	Sur al-Kasrah W15	Euphrates R11/12	al-Mustah salt fields	Totals
Date	14.1	14.1	14/15.1	15.1	15.1	15.1	15.1	
Little Grebe	10	P	2	40		2		54+
Black-necked Grebe			14	1				15
Cormorant	30	8						38
Pygmy Cormorant	40	18				7	1	66
Grey Heron	7			45		4		66
Great White Egret	2			6			1	9
Little Egret				9		3		12
Bittern	2							2
Shelduck				1			32	33
Wigeon			130	20				150
Gadwall			200	8		1		209
Teal	83		70	690		60	1300	2203
Mallard	20		250	115		30	280	695
Pintail	7		10	52	4		40	113
Shoveler			20	40			25	85
Red-crested Pochard				1				1
Pochard	150		400	820		10		1380
Ferruginous Duck	108			45				153
Tufted Duck			10	10				20
White-headed Duck				21				21
Marsh Harrier	16	2	2	5		5	1	31
Hen Harrier	2	1		2	1	1	1	8
Pallid Harrier	1							1
Greater Spotted Eagle	4					1	1	6
Long-legged Buzzard	4			1			1	6
Sparrowhawk	7		2				1	10
Kestrel		6						6
Merlin				1				1
Black Francolin	1	2						3
Water Rail	2			4				6
Moorhen	P		P	P				P

**Table 6 cont'd**  
**River Euphrates (IBA 010) North counts, January 2004**

Species	Shnan oxbow W2	Madan Jadid W10	Halabbiyah	Mheimideh W20	Sur al-Kasrah W15	Euphrates R11/12	al-Mustah salt fields	Totals
<b>Date</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>14/15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	
Purple Gallinule	4			5				<b>9</b>
Coot	500	50	9500	730		2200		<b>12980</b>
Avocet							23	<b>23</b>
Lapwing	30						650	<b>680</b>
Spur-winged Plover			2	13		6		<b>21</b>
White-tailed Plover		5					2	<b>7</b>
Golden Plover							4	<b>4</b>
Ringed Plover					11		1	<b>12</b>
Black-tailed Godwit				2			150	<b>152</b>
Eurasian Curlew							18	<b>18</b>
Spotted Redshank				1		2	1	<b>4</b>
Redshank	1	2	3	5	3	3	30	<b>47</b>
Greenshank				1	3	1	2	<b>7</b>
Green Sandpiper	2	1		2		2	1	<b>8</b>
Common Sandpiper			2					<b>2</b>
Common Snipe	11		18	3	2		2	<b>36</b>
Little Stint					25		10	<b>35</b>
Dunlin					6		2	<b>8</b>
Ruff				45	4		55	<b>104</b>
Armenian Gull			P				120	<b>120+</b>
Great Black-headed Gull							8	<b>8</b>
Black-headed Gull			P				20	<b>20+</b>
Common Kingfisher	4		1					<b>5</b>
Pied Kingfisher	2	2		13				<b>17</b>
Citrine Wagtail				1				<b>1</b>
Graceful Warbler				P				<b>P</b>
Cetti's Warbler				P				<b>P</b>
Bearded Tit	2 sites heard							<b>2 sites</b>
Iraq Babbler	3 sites heard	heard		3 flocks				<b>7 sites</b>
Reed Bunting	P							<b>P</b>

**Table 7**  
**River Euphrates (IBA 010) South counts, January 2004**

Species	Deir ez-Zor	Oxbow W22	Huweijat al-Jurdi	Abu Hammam W30-32	Totals
<b>Date</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>16.1</b>	
Little Grebe	1			15	<b>16</b>
Cormorant	5		40		<b>45</b>
Pygmy Cormorant			9	1	<b>10</b>
Little Bittern			1		<b>1</b>
Night Heron	4		9		<b>13</b>
Grey Heron	12	4	40	1	<b>57</b>
Great White Egret			4		<b>4</b>
Little Egret	1	2	17		<b>20</b>
Wigeon		5			<b>5</b>
Gadwall		10	9		<b>19</b>
Teal		60	20		<b>80</b>
Mallard		40			<b>40</b>
Shoveler			1		<b>1</b>
Black Kite	4	2	40	12	<b>58</b>
Greater Spotted Eagle			1		<b>1</b>
Long-legged Buzzard		3		1	<b>4</b>
Marsh Harrier	1	5		1	<b>6</b>
Hen Harrier		1		2	<b>3</b>
Sparrowhawk	1	1	1		<b>3</b>
Kestrel		1			<b>1</b>
Black Francolin				1	<b>1</b>
Water Rail				1	<b>1</b>
Coot	300			40	<b>340</b>
Black-winged Stilt				1	<b>1</b>
Lapwing				16	<b>16</b>
Ringed Plover		3			<b>3</b>
Kentish Plover				13	<b>13</b>
Spotted Redshank		1		3	<b>4</b>
Redshank		10		6	<b>16</b>
Greenshank		1			<b>1</b>
Green Sandpiper		3		1	<b>4</b>
Common Snipe		8		1	<b>9</b>
Little Stint		2			<b>2</b>
Caspian Gull		P			<b>P</b>
Great Black-headed Gull		5			<b>5</b>
Black-headed Gull		P			<b>P</b>
Common Kingfisher	2				<b>2</b>
Pied Kingfisher	5		2	3	<b>10</b>
Iraq Babbler	3+				<b>3+</b>

**Table 8**  
**Miscellaneous wetlands counts, January 2004**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Sed Wadi Abied IBA 018</b>	<b>Buhayrat al-Laha IBA 016</b>	<b>Sabkhat Muh IBA 018</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>17.1</b>
Black-necked Grebe	2		
Shelduck	3		46
Wigeon			6
Gadwall	3		
Teal			380
Mallard			30
Shoveler			35
Pochard	75		
Hen Harrier	3		
Merlin	2		
Water Rail	1		
Coot	260		
Lapwing		3	8
Jack Snipe		1	
Caspian Gull		20	
Slender-billed Gull	1		
Black-headed Gull		P	
Common Kingfisher		1	



**Table 9**  
**Index of wetland sites in Syria with assessment of condition and conservation significance**

Name (Other names)	IBA no. / Visited by	Point no.	Rough location	Condition/ Importance <sup>1</sup>
<b>Sabkhat al-Jabbul</b> Map 2	<b>IBA 006</b>		<b>South-east of Aleppo</b>	<b>Excellent</b> *****
		<b>P9</b>	Jabbul village	
<u>NW Sector</u>	B-team, 10.2	<b>P10</b>	Start of dyke	
	C-team, 27.2	<b>P11, P12</b>	Dyke	
		<b>P13</b>	Tell on the Dyke	
		<b>P14, P15</b>	Dyke	
		<b>P2</b>	South end of dyke	
	<b>P1</b>	North-west corner		
<u>Central Sector</u>	B-team, 12.2	<b>P3</b>	Near Abu Dreicha	
		<b>P8</b>	North-eastern corner	
<u>SE Lake</u>	B-team, 11.2	<b>P4</b>	Near road	
	C-team, 27.2	<b>P5</b>	Southern shore	
		<b>P6</b>	Southern shore, near canal mouth	
		<b>P7</b>	Irrigation channel	
		<b>P114</b>	Southern shore, guards' hut	
<b>Lake Assad</b>	<b>IBA 007</b>		<b>Central Euphrates valley</b>	<b>Excellent</b> ***? ***?
	A-team, 12.1-13.1	<b>P26, P27</b>	Jazirat al-Thawra	
		<b>P28</b>	Bay on southern shore	
	B-team, 14.2			
<b>Ba'ath Lake</b>	<b>IBA 008</b>		<b>Central Euphrates valley</b>	<b>Very good</b> ****
	A-team,	<b>P35</b>	Southern bank by railway bridge	
	11.1, 13.1 B-team, 15.2	<b>P36-P37</b>	Gravel pits below Lake Assad dam; western end	
<b>Lake Tishreen</b> Map 3	<b>Part of IBA 010</b>		<b>Northern Euphrates valley</b>	<b>Excellent</b> *****
	A-team, 9.1-10.1	<b>P16</b>	Jerablus old bridge	
	B-team, 13.2	<b>P17</b>	Jerablus new bridge	
	C-team, 15.2-16.2	<b>P18-P21</b>	South-western side	
<b>P22-P25</b>		North-eastern side side		

**Table 9 (cont'd)**  
**Index of wetland sites in Syria with assessment of condition and conservation significance**

Name (Other names)	IBA no. / Visited by	Point no.	Rough location	Condition/ Importance <sup>1</sup>
Euphrates valley	IBA 010			Variable ****
<b>Turkish border to Lake Tishreen: RIVER</b>			Map 3	
Jerablus	A-team, 10.1	P16, P17	Turkish border – Lake Tishreen	Good ***
<b>Ba'ath Lake to Halabbiyah gorge: OXBOWS</b>			Maps 4 and 5	
W1 Large	C-team, 17.2	P47	South-western bank	**
W2 Large (Shnan)	A-team, 14.1 C-team, 17.2	P48	South-western bank	Very good ***
W3 Large (as-Sabkha)	C-team, 17.2	P50	South-western bank	Drained *
W4 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W5 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W6 Large (Jdeda)	C-team, 17.2	P79-80	North-eastern bank	*
W7 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W8 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W9 Small	-	-	North-eastern bank	?
W10 Very large (Madan Jadid)	A-team, 14.1 B-team, 16.2	P53	South-western bank north of Madan Jadid	Good **
W11 Large	B-team, 16.2	P60-61	South-western bank	Good **
W12 Small	-	-	North-eastern bank	?
W13 Large	C-team, 17.2	P81	North-eastern bank	Mostly dry *
W14 Small	C-team, 17.2	P83	North-eastern bank	Drained *
<b>Ba'ath Lake to Halabbiyah gorge: RIVER</b>			Maps 4 and 5	
River Euphrates	A-team, 11.1 C-team, 17.2	P51	10 km west of ar-Raqqa	Agricultural *
River Euphrates	C-team, 17.2		W bridge at ar-Raqqa	
River Euphrates + Huweijat Shnan R3	A-team, 14.1 C-team, 17.2	P49	South-western bank, close to oxbow W2	Very good ***
River Euphrates N of Madan Jadid	B-team, 16.2	P52	South-western bank, close to oxbow W10	Intact **
River Euphrates + Riverine forest R11,R12	A-team, 15.1 B-team, 19.2	P57 P107	South-western bank, north of Halabbiyah	Very good **
River Euphrates	C-team, 18.2	P82	Between oxbows W13 and W14	
al-Mustah saltfields	A-team, 15.1 B-team, 19.2	P59	South-western bank, north of Halabbiyah	Excellent ***

**Table 9 (cont'd)**

**Index of wetland sites in Syria with assessment of condition and conservation significance**

Name (Other names)	IBA no. / Visited by	Point no.	Rough location	Condition/ Importance <sup>1</sup>
<b>Halabbiyah gorge to Deir ez-Zor: OXBOWS</b> Map 5				
W15 Small (Sur al-Kasrah)	A-team, 15.1	P62	North-eastern bank	Dry saltpan **
W16 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W17 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W18 Small (Mheimideh)	A-team, 15.1	P63, P64	North-eastern bank	Very good
	B-team, 17.2		15 km upstream from Deir ez-Zor	****
	C-team, 19.2			
Salt-fields	B-team, 17.2	P65	4 km south-east of Mheimideh	Good **
W19 Small	-	-	North-eastern bank	?
W20 Small	B-team, 17.2	P66	North-eastern bank	Poor, dry *
<b>Halabbiyah gorge to Deir ez-Zor: RIVER</b> Map 5				
Euphrates river	B-team, 19.2	P54	37km north-west of Deir	? / **
Halabbiyah Ruins	A-team, 14.1-15.1 B-team, 19.2	P55	South-western bank	Good ***
'See-see Partridge village'	B-team, 19.2	P56	South-western bank north of Halabbiyah	
Halabbiyah Gorge	B-team, 19.2	P57, P58	South-western bank north of Halabbiyah	
Zalabbiyah	C-team, 18.2		North-eastern bank opposite Halabbiyah	
Howeijat on northern bank	C-team, 18.2	P84	North-eastern bank south of Zalabbiyah	
Deir ez-Zor city footbridge	A-team, 16.1 B-team, 17.2, 20.2	P67	Footbridge north to Agricultural University	Very good **
<b>Deir ez-Zor to Iraqi border: OXBOWS</b> Map 7				
W21 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W22 Small	A-team, 16.1	-	North-eastern bank	Good **
W23 Small	C-team, 19.2	P85	South-western bank	Partly drained *
W24 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W25 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
W26 Small	-	-	North-eastern bank	?
W27a Small	B-team, 18.2	P68	North-eastern bank	Poor *
W27b Small	-	P69		Very poor
W28 Small (al-Ashara)	B-team, 18.2 C-team, 20.2	P70-P72	South-western bank	Very good **
W29 Small	-		South-western bank	-
W30 Small (Abu Hammam)	A-team, 16.1	P76	North-eastern bank	**
	C-team, 20.2	P112		
W31/W32 Large (Gharanij)	A-team, 16.1 C-team, 20.2	P77-78	North-eastern bank	Severely degraded **
W33 Small	-	-	South-western bank	?
<b>Deir ez-Zor to Iraqi border: RIVER</b> Map 7				
Huweijat near oxbow W22	A-team, 16.1	-	North-eastern bank	Very good **
Huweijat al-Jurdi	A-team, 16.1	P73, P74	66 km south-east of Deir ez-Zor	Good **
Gull roost	C-team, 20.2	P111	Between oxbows W28 and W30	
Doura Europos	B-team, 18.2	P75	South-western bank	Good **

**Table 9 (cont'd)**  
**Index of wetland sites in Syria with assessment of condition and conservation significance**

Name (Other names)	IBA no. / Visited by	Point no.	Rough location	Condition/ Importance <sup>1</sup>
<b>Buhayrat al-Laha</b>	<b>IBA 016</b> A-team, 8.1	<b>P86</b>	<b>Coast near Lebanese border</b>	<b>Degraded</b> *
<b>Lake of Homs</b> (Lake Qattine) Map 9	<b>IBA 017</b> A-team, 7.1-8.1 B-team, 8.2-9.2	<b>P87-P91</b> <b>P92-P96</b> <b>P97-P99</b>	<b>On Lebanese border</b> N shore W shore SW side	?degraded *****
<b>Palmyra Area</b>	<b>IBA 018</b>			
Sed Wadi Abied	A-team, 6.1 C-team, 26.2	<b>P100</b>	North-west of Palmyra	Excellent ***
Sabkhat Muh	A-team, 17.1 B-team, 21.2	-	South-east of Palmyra	Pristine **
<b>Lower Khabur reservoir</b> Map 10	<b>No status</b> C-team, 21.2	<b>P101</b> <b>P102, P103</b>	<b>South-east of al-Hasakah</b> South-east point Eastern side	<b>Very good</b> ***
<b>Upper Khabur reservoir</b> Map 10	<b>No status</b> C-team, 21.2	<b>P104</b>	<b>North-west of al-Hasakah</b> Eastern bank	<b>Very good</b> **
<b>al-Shukhna reservoir</b>	<b>No status</b> B-team, 20.2 C-team, 22.2	<b>P106</b>	<b>Desert east of Palmyra</b>	<b>Artificial</b> **

<sup>1</sup>This is a quick assessment of the state of the habitat and a crude assessment of its conservation importance, using an original scheme:

- \*\*\*\*\* Of international importance deserving Ramsar status
- \*\*\*\* Of international importance
- \*\*\* Of national importance
- \*\* Of local importance
- \* At present of limited or little importance

**Table 10**  
**Non-wetland sites visited during the Expedition**

Site	Team, date	Rough area	Point no.
'Eagle Owl cliff'	B-team, 20.2	East of Palmyra	P108
'Griffon cliff'	B-team, 20.2	East of Palmyra	P109
Bald Ibis site	B-team, 20.2 C-team, 26.2	Near Palmyra	
Talila reserve	B-team, 21.2 C-team, 23.2	East of Palmyra	
Tal Brak ruins	C-team, 21.2	North-east of al-Hasakah	
Meadows	C-team, 21.2	Between Tal Brak and al-Hasakah	P105
Qasr el-Hair es-Sharqi castle	C-team, 22.2	Desert south-west of Deir ez-Zor	
Hamad desert	C-team, 24.2, 25.2	South-east of Palmyra	
Mount Orh uplands	C-team, 26.2	North-east and north of Palmyra	
Jabal al-Bilas	C-team, 27.2	West of Palmyra	

**Table 11**  
**Recommendations regarding IBA status of sites visited during the Expedition**

IBA no.	Site	Recommendation	Rationale
IBA 006 Ramsar site	Sabkhat al-Jabbul	Retain	Most important Syrian wetland; huge numbers of a wide variety of water birds
IBA 007	Lake Assad	Retain	Incompletely surveyed but several important areas for wintering geese, ducks, terns
IBA 008	Ba'ath Lake	Retain	Important for wintering ducks; educational potential
IBA 010	Euphrates valley:		
	Lake Tishreen	<b>IBA+Ramsar status</b>	Vast numbers of water birds, raptors; may hold significant breeding colonies
	Shnan area W2	<b>IBA status</b>	Wintering ducks (especially Ferruginous), significant populations of raptors
	Halabbiyah gorge / riverine woods (R11-12) / al-Mustah salt fields	<b>IBA status</b>	Wide variety of wintering ducks; outstanding site for waders
	Mheimideh W18	<b>IBA status</b>	Wide variety of wintering ducks (including White-headed); good site for waders
IBA 016	Buhayrat al-Laha	Degazette	Of minimal value
IBA 017	Lake of Homs	Retain	Important for wintering ducks
IBA 018	Tadmur/Sabkhat Muh	Retain	Primarily for migrants
	Sed Wadi Abied	<b>IBA status</b>	Important for migrants
-	Lower Khabur reservoir	<b>IBA status</b>	Important for wintering waterfowl

**Table 12**

**Further recommended fieldwork on Syrian wetlands and on wetland species with assessment of degree of urgency**

**WINTER**

- \*\*\* **Survey for wintering Sociable Plover (and secondarily for Great Bustard): the steppes round Palmyra and agricultural land in the NE, near Lake Assad and Lake Homs**
- \*\* Survey for wintering Slender-billed Curlew: the agricultural land round the Khabur reservoirs, near Lake Assad and Ba'ath Lake
- \*\* Comprehensive winter survey of Sabkhat al-Jabbul
- \*\* Monthly censuses of ducks, waders and raptors: key wetland sites – Sabkhat al-Jabbul, Lake of Homs, Lake Tishreen, Ba'ath Lake, Lower Khabur reservoir and Mheimideh

**BREEDING SEASON**

- \*\*\* **Search for further undiscovered breeding colonies of Northern Bald Ibis**
- \*\*\* **Breeding surveys of key sites (as above; notably Sabkhat al-Jabbul and Lake Tishreen)**
- \*\* Survey of breeding species (notably Pygmy Cormorant, White-headed Duck, Marbled Teal, Ferruginous Duck) at other sites
- \*\* Survey of Yarmuk valley (on Syrian/Jordanian border) threatened with construction of dam
- \* Thorough survey of breeding species of lower Euphrates valley, with particular search for Mesopotamian breeding species such as Basra Reed Warbler and Hypocolius
- \* Survey of breeding species in Anti-Lebanon mountains
- \* Survey of breeding species of Jabal al-Bilas and other vegetated desert areas; comparison with areas where grazing is uncontrolled
- \* Studies of Basalt Desert on Jordanian border, particularly to search for Houbara Bustard, *Ammoperdix* partridges and 'Basalt Wheatear'

**MIGRATION SEASONS**

- \*\* Survey of passage at key sites (suggested sites would include Sabkhat al-Jabbul, Euphrates bridge at Deir ez-Zor, Lake Tishreen)
- \* There are already extensive observations from the Palmyra area at all times of year (Serra *et al* 2005).

- \*\*\* Urgent
- \*\* High priority
- \* Low priority

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# APPENDIX 1

## Index of sites

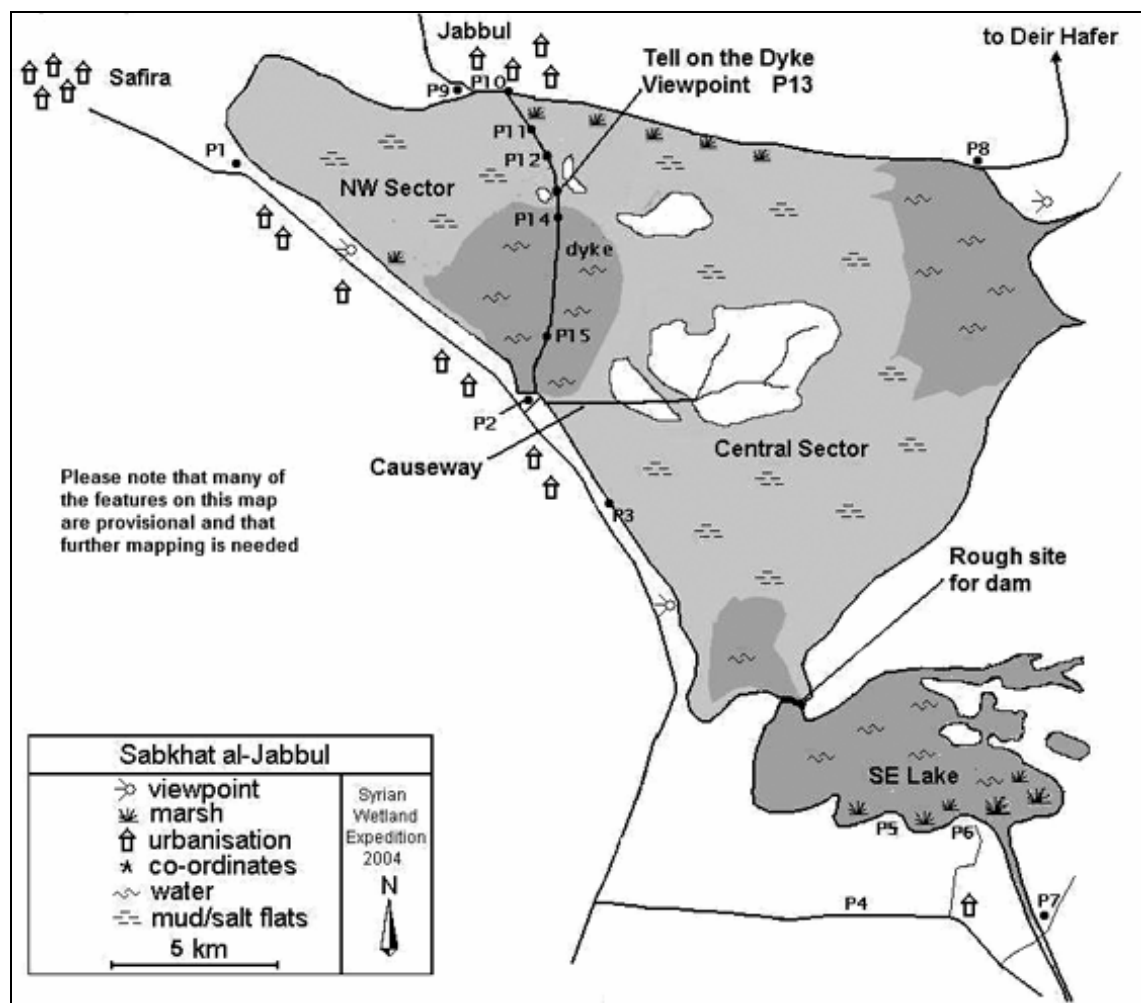
Point	Co-ordinates	Rough Location	Map
P1	N36°03'03,77" E037°26'52,02"	Sabkhat al-Jabbul, NW corner	+
P2	N35°59'55,33" E037°32'55,72"	Jabbul dyke, S end	+
P3	N35°58'03,60" E037°34'36,78"	Jabbul, SW shore, Central Sector	+
P4	N35°50'36,90" E037°39'02,94"	Jabbul, SE Lake	+
P5	N35°52'09,44" E037°38'57,88"	Jabbul, S shore, SE Lake	+
P6	N35°52'07,66" E037°41'33,63"	Jabbul, S shore, SE Lake	+
P7	N35°50'17,49" E037°43'15,31"	Jabbul, SE Lake	+
P8	N36°03'11,75" E037°41'41,53"	Jabbul, N shore, Central Sector	+
P9	N36°04'48,72" E037°30'55,02"	Jabbul village	+
P10	N36°04'30,96" E037°31'37,44"	Jabbul dyke, N end	+
P11	N36°04'12,90" E037°31'58,92"	Jabbul dyke	+
P12	N36°03'50,34" E037°32'26,40"	Jabbul dyke	+
P13	N36°03'18,42" E037°32'50,64"	Jabbul dyke, Tell	+
P14	N36°02'22,38" E037°32'51,60"	Jabbul dyke	+
P15	N36°00'54,84" E037°32'53,40"	Jabbul dyke	+
P16	N36°49'30,59" E038°01'57,86"	Jerablus, river Euphrates	+
P17	N36°47'31,77" E038°02'04,84"	Jerablus new bridge	+
P18	N36°45'33,18" E038°02'30,77"	Lake Tishreen, W side	+
P19	N36°44'08,19" E038°01'33,89"	Lake Tishreen, W side	+
P20	N36°42'04,80" E038°03'04,60"	Lake Tishreen, W side	+
P21	N36°39'05,69" E038°08'33,82"	Lake Tishreen, W side	+
P22	N36°40'25,85" E038°08'54,55"	Lake Tishreen, E side	+
P23	N36°41'02,80" E038°06'57,51"	Lake Tishreen, E side	+
P24	N36°43'07,36" E038°05'32,53"	Lake Tishreen, E side	+
P25	N36°45'27,95" E038°03'59,88"	Lake Tishreen, E side	+
P26	N35°49'38,58" E038°29'02,64"	Lake Assad	
P27	N35°50'52,66" E038°28'22,46"	Lake Assad	
P28	N35°48'33,23" E038°24'48,62"	Lake Assad	
P29	N36°05'39,22" E038°02'53,17"	Lake Assad	
P30	N36°11'43,78" E038°04'31,46"	Lake Assad	
P31	N36°07'24,47" E038°01'16,12"	Lake Assad	
P32	N35°53'47,39" E038°28'46,79"	Lake Assad	
P33	N35°51'34,61" E038°45'03,20"	Lake Ba'ath	
P34	N35°50'59,08" E038°43'43,59"	Lake Ba'ath	
P35	N35°51'03,82" E038°42'07,39"	Lake Ba'ath	
P36	N35°52'27,09" E038°35'55,82"	Lake Ba'ath	
P37	N35°51'16,39" E038°34'56,54"	Lake Ba'ath	
P38	N35°52'49,02" E038°43'37,10"	Lake Ba'ath	
P39	N35°51'58,72" E038°43'12,46"	Lake Ba'ath	
P40	N35°52'14,13" E038°42'54,44"	Lake Ba'ath	
P41	N35°51'56,42" E038°41'56,74"	Lake Ba'ath	
P42	N35°51'36,50" E038°40'30,30"	Lake Ba'ath	
P43	N35°51'30,89" E038°39'24,98"	Lake Ba'ath	
P44	N35°52'03,09" E038°38'29,32"	Lake Ba'ath	
P45	N35°51'34,61" E038°45'03,20"	Lake Ba'ath	
P46	N35°51'03,82" E038°42'07,39"	Lake Ba'ath	
P47	N35°50'47,30" E039°09'53,93"	W1	
P48	N35°50'03,71" E039°13'35,99"	W2 Shnan	
P49	N35°51'08,81" E039°15'05,89"	R3	
P50	N35°49'25,91" E039°15'53,99"	W3 as-Sabkha	
P51	N35°54'59,62" E038°52'55,52"	Euphrates west of ar-Raqqa	
P52	N35°47'13,82" E039°35'59,27"	Euphrates, R9	
P53	N35°45'37,43" E039°35'51,56"	W10 Madan Jadid	
P54	N35°34'50,36" E039°51'34,72"	Euphrates	
P55	N35°42'10,15" E039°49'11,95"	Halabbiyah ruins	



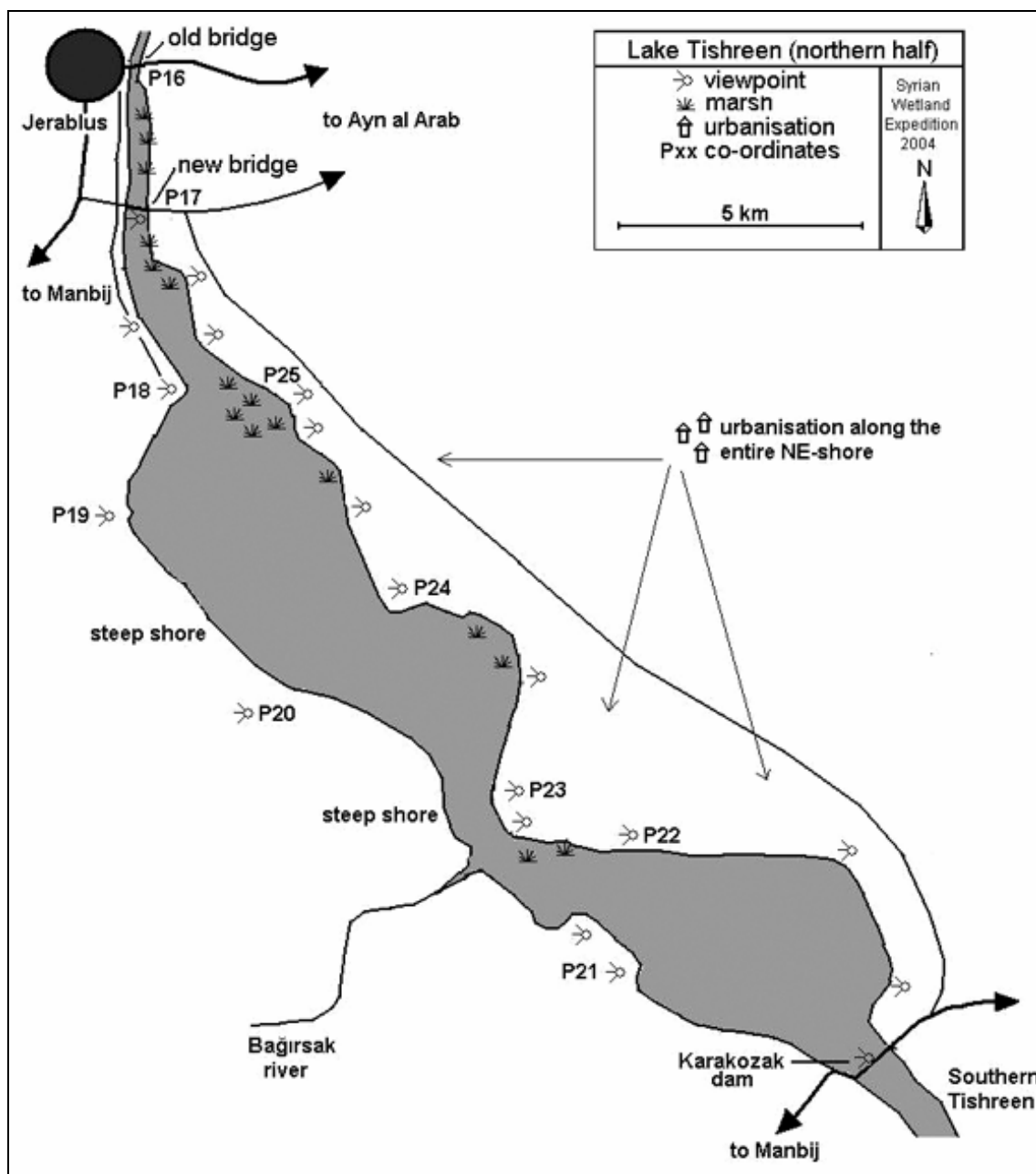
P56	N35°39'46,83" E039°49'08,76"	Halabbiyah 'See-See village'	
P57	N35°43'58,68" E039°48'06,40"	Halabbiyah	
P58	N35°44'41,22" E039°47'33,13"	Halabbiyah	
P59	N35°44'16,45" E039°40'36,91"	al-Mustah salt fields	
P60	N35°44'55,81" E039°38'41,09"	W11	
P61	N35°44'55,08" E039°38'48,98"	W11	
P62	N35°35'42,85" E039°55'45,05"	W15 Sur al-Kasrah	
P63	N35°25'55,18" E040°05'32,05"	W18 Mheimideh	+
P64	N35°25'51,47" E040°06'02,48"	W18 Mheimideh	+
P65	N35°24'38,54" E040°07'42,49"	Saltfields 4km SE of Mheimideh	
P66	N35°51'59,45" E038°35'48,97"	W20	
P67	N35°20'36,02" E040°08'59,74"	Deir ez-Zor footbridge	
P68	N34°59'20,57" E040°26'59,72"	W27a	
P69	N34°59'09,79" E040°27'43,40"	W27b	
P70	N34°53'39,67" E040°32'48,17"	W28 al-Ashara	
P71	N34°53'45,38" E040°32'10,72"	W28 al-Ashara	
P72	N34°53'31,10" E040°33'19,66"	W28 al-Ashara	
P73	N34°53'03,70" E040°37'36,95"	Huweijat al-Jurdi	
P74	N34°52'43,87" E040°37'57,63"	Huweijat al-Jurdi	
P75	N34°44'44,90" E040°43'36,98"	Doura Europos	
P76	N34°47'55,77" E040°42'33,23"	W30 Abu Hammam	+
P77	N34°47'44,11" E040°45'41,92"	W31/W32 Gharanij	+
P78	N34°45'45,22" E040°45'11,94"	W31/W32 Gharanij	+
P79	N35°50'23,77" E039°24'16,42"	W6 Jdeda	
P80	N35°51'27,44" E039°24'58,17"	W6 Jdeda	
P81	N35°46'20,82" E039°44'15,43"	W13	
P82	N35°44'59,33" E039°45'26,81"	Euphrates between W13 and W14	
P83	N35°45'48,46" E039°46'09,82"	W14	
P84	N35°37'52,81" E039°49'27,07"	Euphrates south of Zalabbiyah	
P85	N35°14'09,41" E040°18'21,00"	W23	
P86	N34°43'41,63" E035°59'58,61"	Buhayrat al-Laha	
P87	N34°40'01,74" E036°36'12,27"	Homs, N side	+
P88	N34°40'01,13" E036°35'01,39"	Homs, N side	+
P89	N34°38'55,79" E036°32'28,44"	Homs, N side	+
P90	N34°40'08,21" E036°31'09,19"	Homs, N side	+
P91	N34°40'26,10" E036°29'42,72"	Homs, N side	+
P92	N34°38'38,32" E036°28'59,56"	Homs, W side	+
P93	N34°38'13,74" E036°29'05,84"	Homs, W side	+
P94	N34°36'32,22" E036°29'24,00"	Homs, W side	+
P95	N34°36'01,92" E036°28'45,48"	Homs, W side	+
P96	N34°35'46,74" E036°29'53,70"	Homs, W side	+
P97	N34°35'12,36" E036°31'26,16"	Homs, SW side	+
P98	N34°34'34,59" E036°31'19,88"	Homs, SW side	+
P99	N34°36'34,32" E036°33'06,66"	Homs, SW side	+
P100	N34°41'18,09" E038°20'06,18"	Sed Wadi Abied	
P101	N36°14'41,92" E040°49'05,71"	Lower Khabur River	+
P102	N36°21'55,25" E040°50'05,62"	Lower Khabur River	+
P103	N36°25'26,05" E040°52'10,25"	Lower Khabur River	+
P104	N36°36'35,00" E040°35'14,54"	Upper Khabur River	+
P105	N36°37'12,92" E040°57'09,43"	Meadows east of al-Hasakah	
P106	N34°51'33,45" E038°48'35,61"	al-Shukhna reservoir	
P107	N35°43'51,78" E039°48'17,69"	Riverine forest N of Halabbiyah	
P108	N34°54'04,93" E039°04'26,08"	'Eagle Owl cliff'	
P109	N34°51'34,00" E038°48'35,72"	'Griffon cliff'	
P110	N35°06'55,52" E040°23'28,04"	Tell al-Zabary	
P111	N34°57'10,96" E040°34'37,52"	North of Abu Hammam	
P112	N34°47'37,42" E040°41'31,40"	W1.5km SW of Abu Hammam W30	
P113	N34°34'45,72" E036°29'46,38"	Homs	
P114	N35°52'30,14" E037°38'53,89"	Jabbul, guards' hut, SE Lake	

## APPENDIX 2

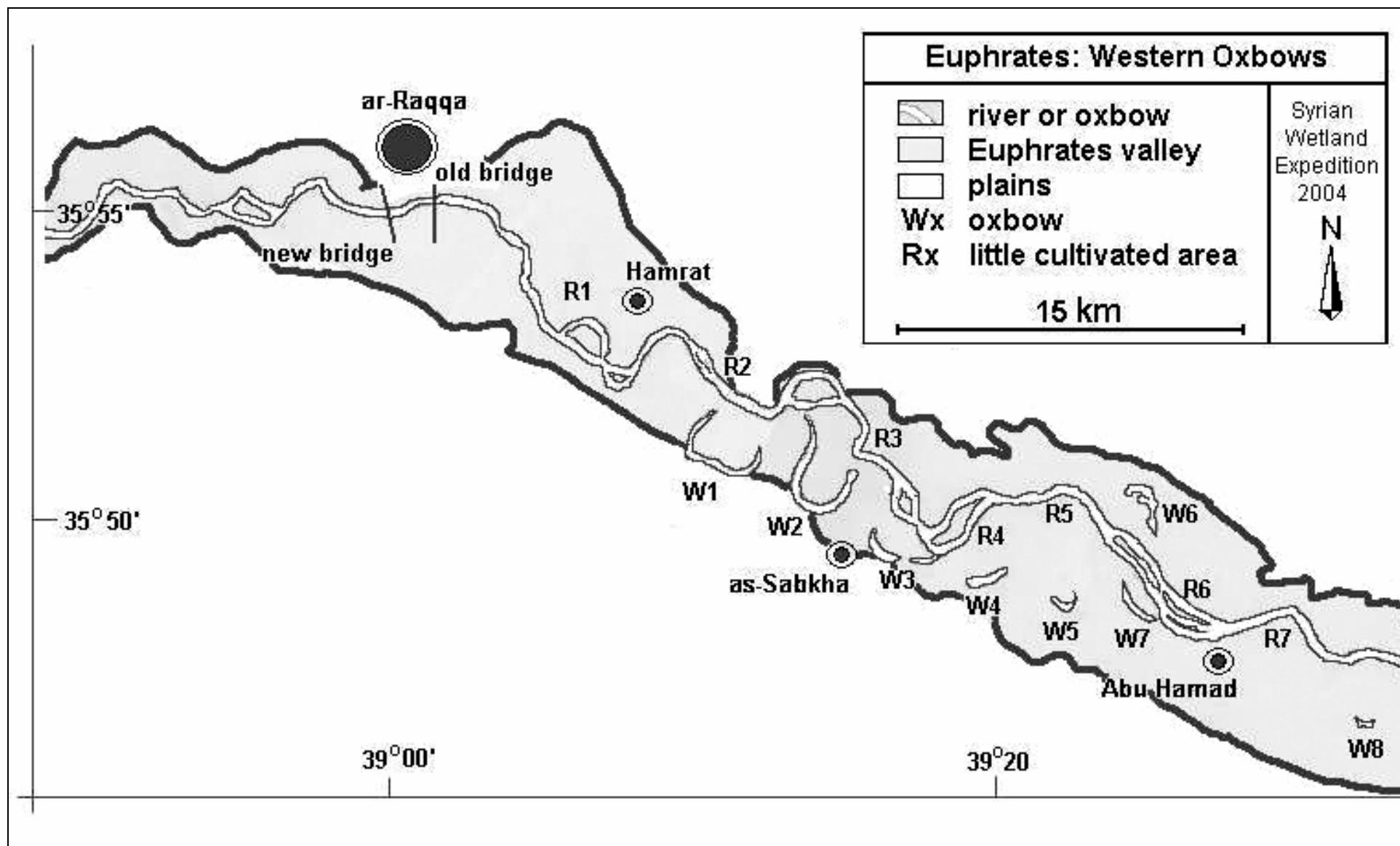
### Site Maps



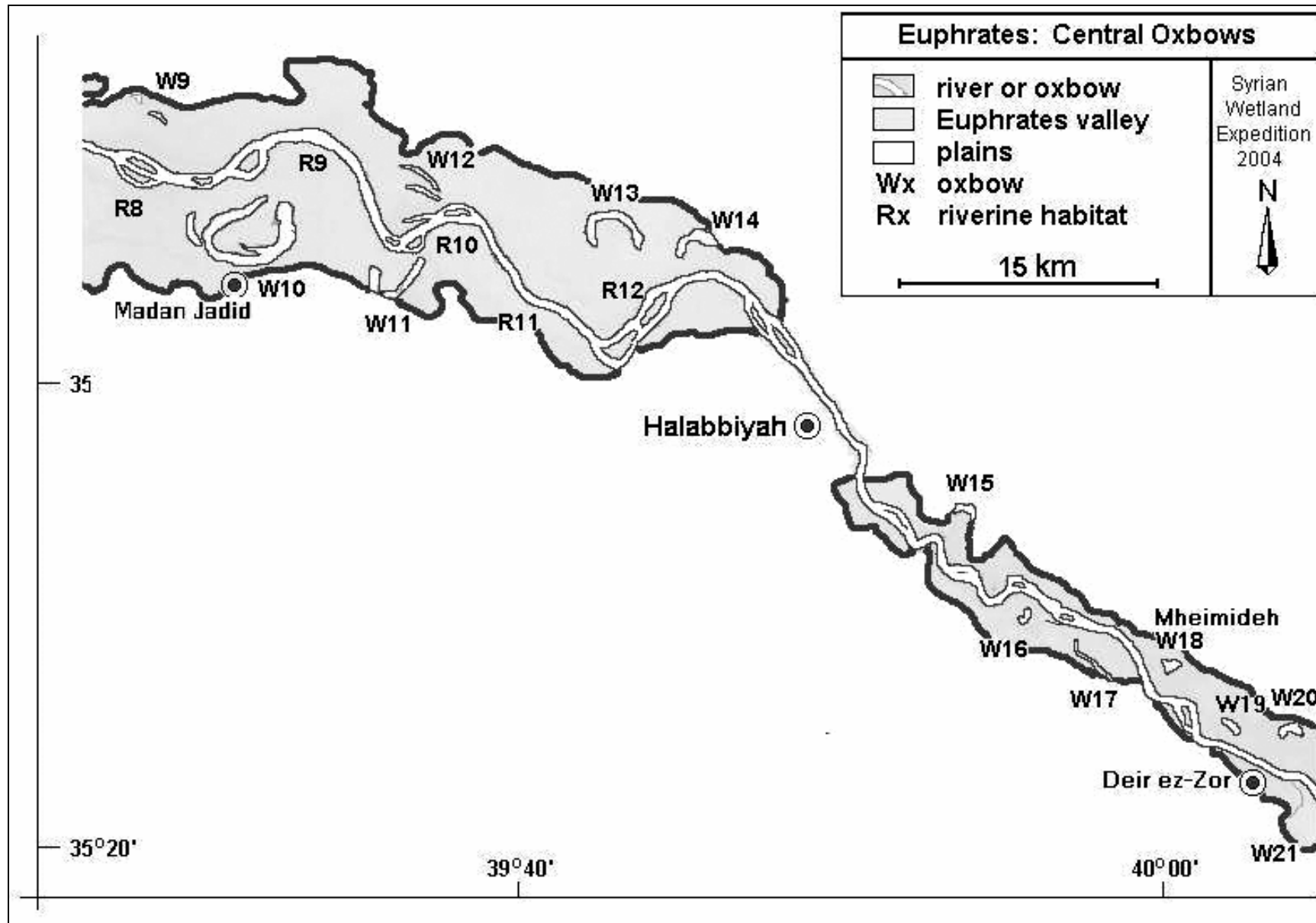
MAP 2 Sabkhat al-Jabbul



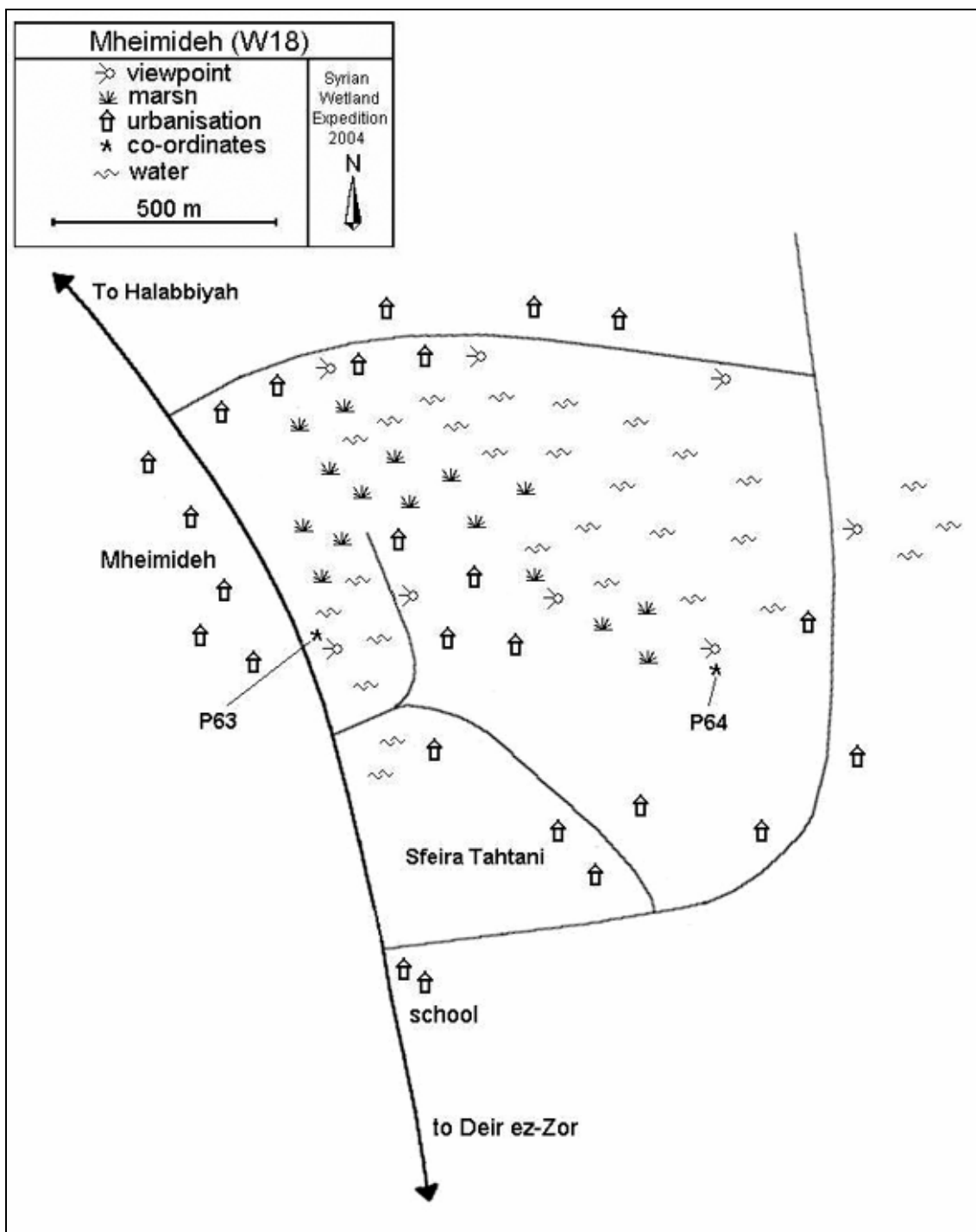
MAP 3 Lake Tishreen



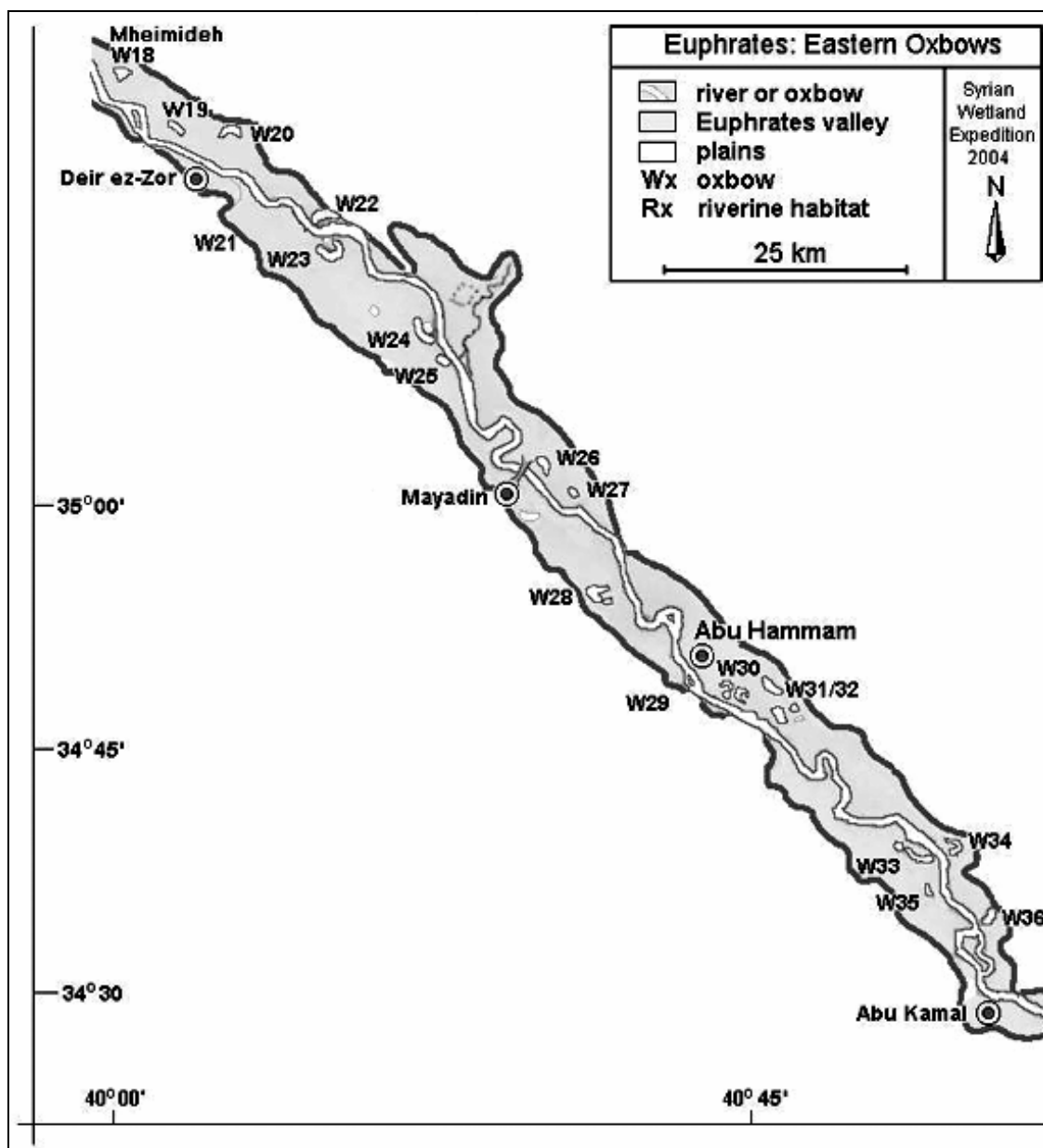
**MAP 4** Western oxbows



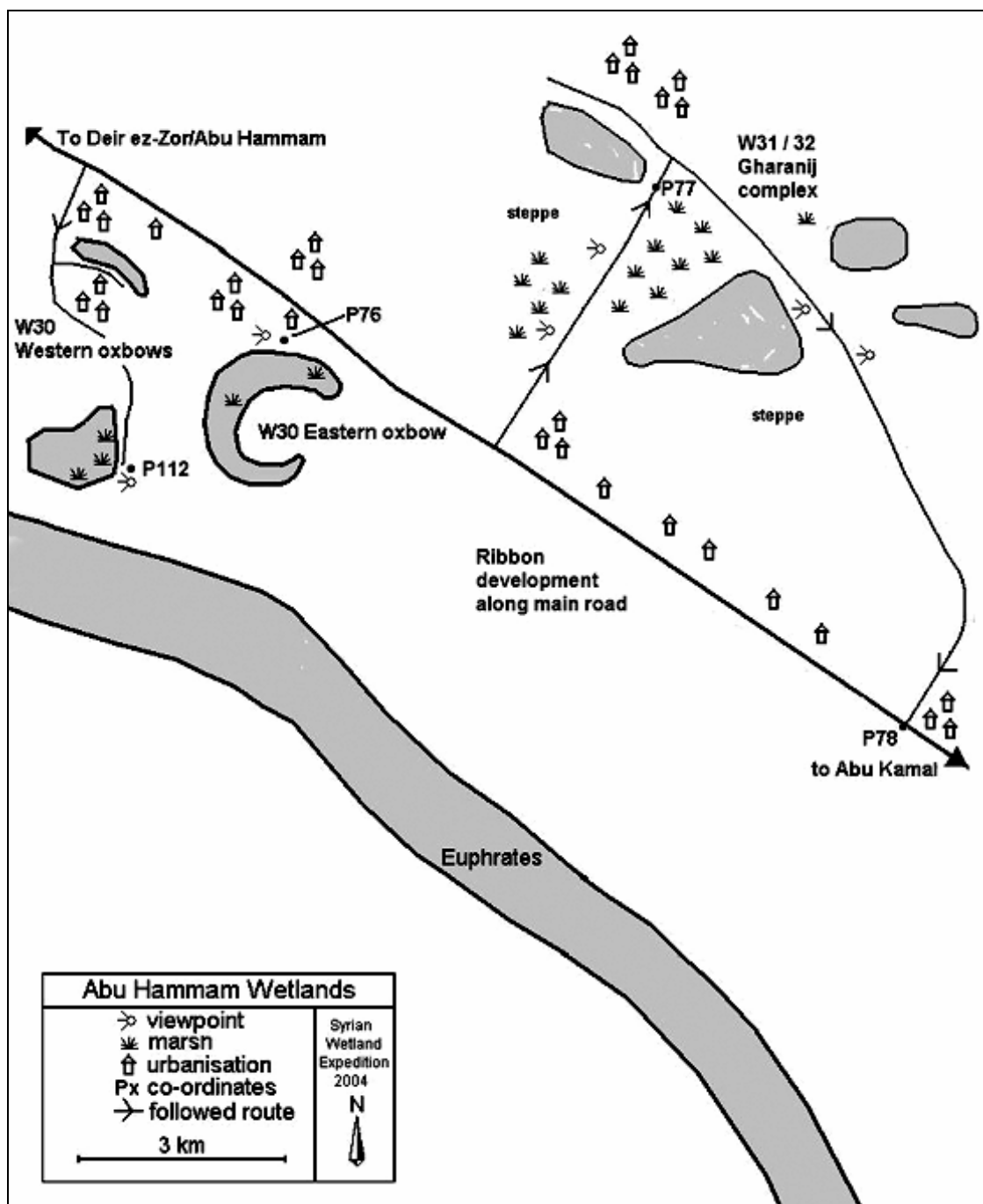
MAP 5 Central oxbows



**MAP 6**      **Mheimideh**

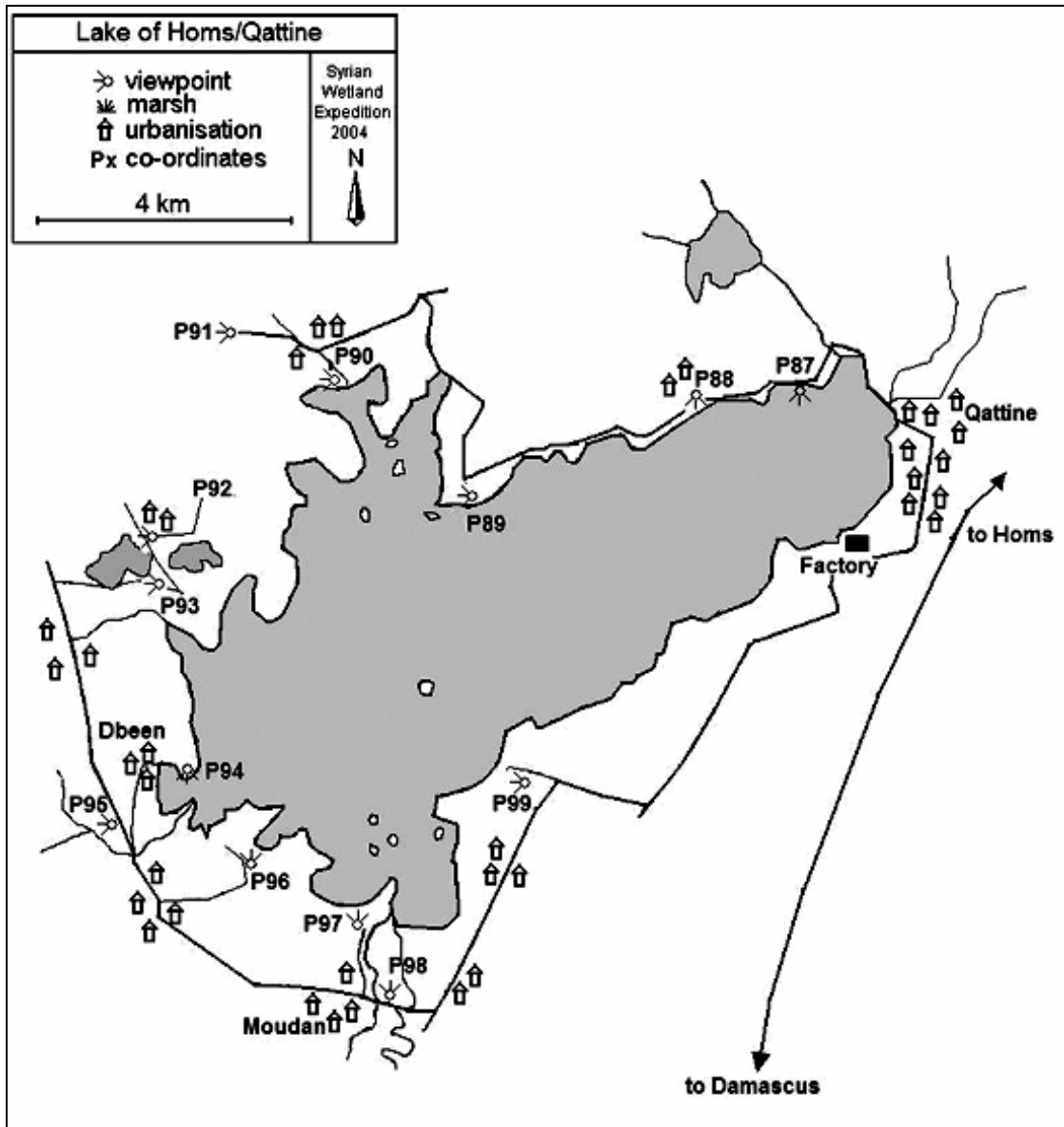


MAP 7 Eastern oxbows

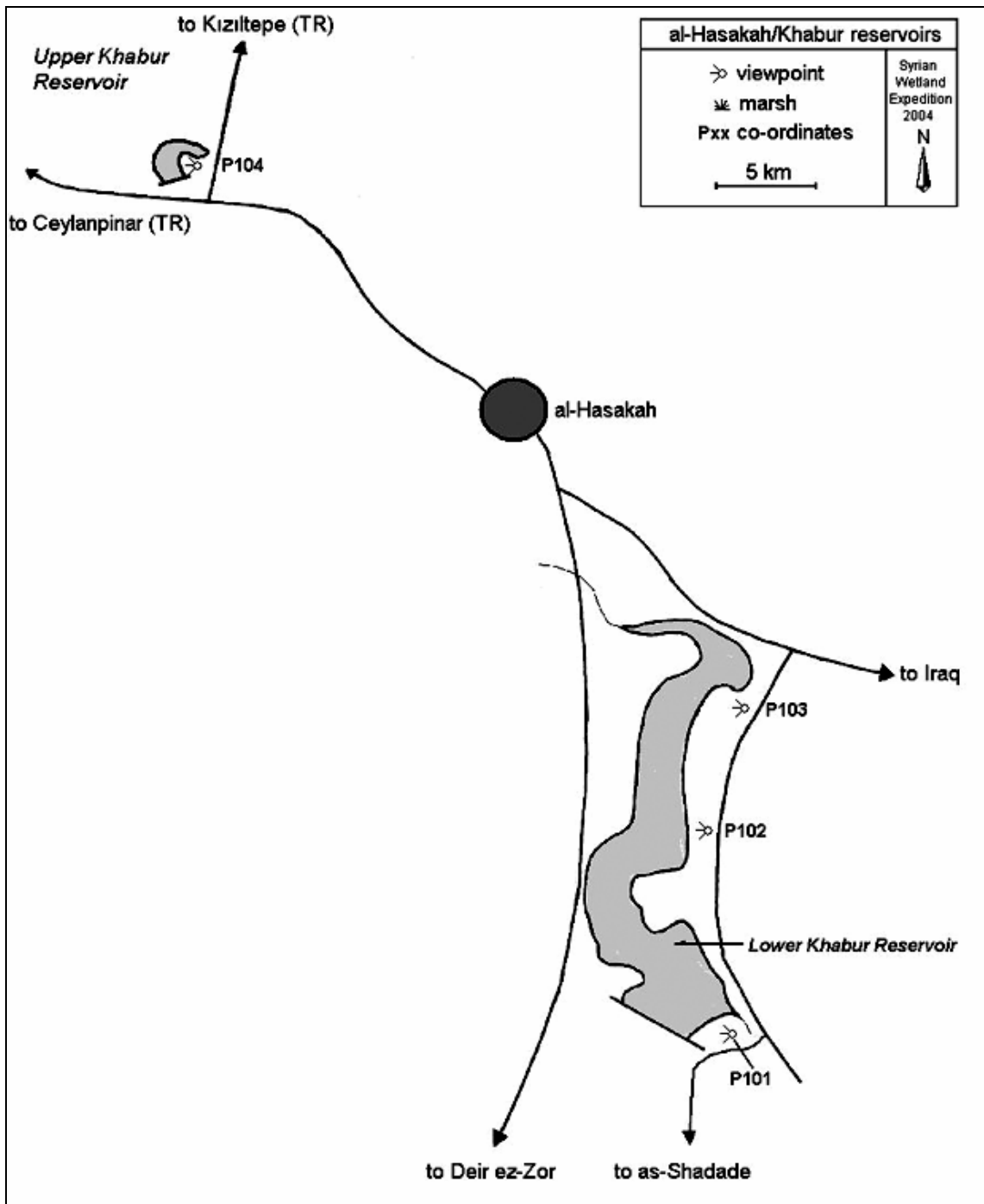


MAP 8 Abu Hammam





MAP 9 Lake of Homs



MAP 10 Khabur

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