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March 16, 2006



Iraq marshes exhibition in Norfolk

Over the past two years BirdLife International has been helping train Iraqi biologists to carry out bird and other wildlife surveys of the internationally important Mesopotamian Marshes.

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME) contributed £1000 from its Conservation and Research Fund towards this training.

Part of the Canada-Iraq Marshland Initiative (CIMI) - and funded by the Canadian Government - the training has, for reasons of security, been carried out in Syria and Jordan. The Iraqi team are from a new NGO, Nature Iraq, and already one summer and two winter surveys have been undertaken. Whilst only a shadow of their former self, due to drainage during the Saddam Hussein regime, the marshes of southern Iraq are still hugely important for their breeding and wintering bird populations. They hold 18 globally threatened species as well as three endemics (Iraq Babbler, Basra Reed Warbler and Grey Hypocolius (near-endemic)). Now that a re-flooding and rehabilitation programme has started there is great optimism for their future.

During these surveys Iraqi biologists took photos of the marshlands depicting their moods and the way of life of the Marsh Arabs. These are to be featured in an exhibition hosted by BirdLife International and the new BIRDscapes Gallery in Glandford, near Cley in North Norfolk. It will run from 22 April to 2 May 2006 and all are welcome.

Anyone wanting further details should contact Steve or Liz Harris at BIRDscapes (01263 741742)

For further information on the BirdLife International project please contact Richard Porter (email: richardporter@dialstart.net)

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Posted by Surfbirds at March 16, 2006 05:19 PM

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