

AVIFAUNAL OBSERVATIONS IN “ABU-ZARAG” WETLANDS, CENTRAL MARSHES, LOWER MESOPOTAMIA.

PART – I

24, Mar. 04

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During the continuous field studies on Abu-Zarag wetlands, which is, obviously, a recently-flooded old marsh, that covers about 120km²? It was classified as “IBA” by the “Bird life International organization” as a part of the general Central Marshes for some given reasons (Evans 1995). It contains scattered but intensive Papyrus and Reed beds, in addition to some *Acacia*-covered areas and some areas of long and medium grass. As Abu-Zarag contains many important ornithological factors, it harbors a some which exceeds the expectation, since it is recently flooded! In addition this fieldwork occurred within breeding season, to see considerable list of Iraqi breeding Waterfowl and Passerines (see the list).

The survey was done quickly, as we have to cover the site within limited time span, so, the following results do not represent the actual state of birds at this site. More intensive fieldwork need to be done as well as time to make quite bird counts, which are to cover, at least, 12 months.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bird recordings were held by direct observation, either from the motorized canoe that was used for moving over distant or unshallow areas, or by wading within reed beds. 12x binoculars were used to identify some far species. A map of 1:100000 scale was used to trace my fieldwork path and to locate the stopping selected sites. Collins Field guide was used when necessary.

The area was divided into two sections to control the main area within the restricted time, so I submitted the northern half (approximately) for surveying. Weather was calm, hot, no wind and clear sunny.

RESULTS

As the submitted area has a good variety of surface features and morphology, of plant-cover distribution, open-water areas, small or tiny, dry islandlets, dense papyrus and reed beds and *acacia* bushes; it harbors very considerable variety of bird-species. Some of these species are in abundant numbers, like White-tailed Plover that was distinct breeder, while one nest with two eggs was observed. The other abundant species was the Little Bittern, surely it was breeder, but I couldn’t find a nest! Many other species were observed frequently, but less than the upper case, which ranged between 5-10 c., while others where observed for one time only.

In spite of being accurate, while some ambiguous or unclear observations were excluded; we can not judge the state of each bird in Abu-Zarag wet lands for this period, as it was done rapidly; so, I didn’t use the common terms used in describing bird state (Abundant, Common, Rare, Scarce ...etc.) at the systematic list below.

The following abbreviations were used to describe the observed birds, which are:

- B. = Breeder (the birds that absolutely seen in breeding plumage)
- F. = Recorded for few times (i.e. within 1-5 times)
- M. = Median state (i.e.6-10 times)
- A. = Abundant, which was seen everywhere (more than 10 recording times)
- ? = Represents the unsure state (concerning breeding)

**LIST OF BIRD SPECIES OBSERVED IN ABU-ZARAG WETLANDS,
AT 27.MAR.03**

BIRD SPECIES			STATE
1.	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Little Grebe	F.B.
2.	<i>Ardeola purpurea</i>	Purple Heron	F.?
3.	<i>Egretta gazetta</i>	Little Egret	F.B.
4.	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Squacco Heron	F.B.
5.	<i>Bulbulcus ibis</i>	Cattle Egret	F.B.
6.	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Night Heron	F.?
7.	<i>Loxobrychus minutus</i>	Little Bittern	A.B.
8.	<i>Marmaronetta anrusterostris</i>	Marbled Teal	F.B.
9.	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Moorhen	F.?
10.	<i>Himantopus nimantopus</i>	Black-winged Stilt	A.B.
11.	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	Black-winged Pratincole	M.B.
12.	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Red-wattled Plover	F.?
13.	<i>Vanillus spinosus</i>	Spur-winged Plover	F.?
14.	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	White-tailed Plover	A.B.
15.	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Common Ringed Plover	F.?
16.	<i>Charadrius asiaticus</i>	Caspian Plover	F.?
17.	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Redshank	F.?
18.	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	F.?
19.	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Black-headed Gull	F.?
20.	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Herring Gull	F.?
21.	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Little Tern	A.?
22.	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	White-winged Tern	M.?
23.	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Whiskered Tern	F.?
24.	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>	Gull-billed Tern	F.?
25.	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common Tern	M.?
26.	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Pied Kingfisher	A.B.
27.	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Fan-tailed Warbler	F.B.
28.	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>	Graceful Warbler	A.B.
29.	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Great Reed Warbler	A.B.
30.	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Eurasian Reed Warbler	M.B.
31.	<i>Turdoides altirostris</i>	Iraq Babbler	F.?

In addition to the waterfowl and the water-close species, some land-birds were observed at the dry areas of the small islandlets within the marsh, or were recorded around but close to the shore, which are: (attaching with the above list)

**LIST OF LAND BIRD-SPECIES OBSERVED IN AND AROUND
ABU-ZARAG WETLANDS, AT 27, MAR. 04**

32.	<i>Halcyon smyrnsis</i>	White-Breasted Kingfisher	F.?
33.	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Ringed Dove	M.?
34.	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Black Francolin	M.B.
35.	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	Blue-checked Bee-eater	F.?
36.	<i>Herundo rustica</i>	Common Swallow	M.B.
37.	<i>Riparia reparia</i>	Sand Marten	A.?
38.	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Eurasian Nightingale	F.?
39.	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Crested Lark	M.?
40.	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	A.?