

Research Article

Re-sighting Egyptian Vulture, *Neophron percnopterus*, (Linnaeus, 1758) with raptors survey at East Al-Hammar marshes and Abo Al-Khaseeb, south of Iraq

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Abstract: Birds of prey play a vital ecological role in maintaining the ecological system. To evaluate the importance of Iraqi habitat for raptor as breeding or migrating sites, this study was aimed to survey the raptors in two ecologically different habitat, including East Al-Hammar marshes and Abo Al-Khaseeb in North and South of Basrah Province, Iraq. The most significant finding in this study was re-observing the Egyptian vulture, *Neophron percnopterus* in both studying areas. The results showed the presence of 13 species of raptors. Five out of 13 species were classified by International Union for Conservation Nature (IUCN) under different threatened categories, viz. *Circus aeruginosus* and *Aquila heliaca* as vulnerable species, and *C. macrourus* as near threatened species. Additionally, East Al-Hammar showed more diversity of raptors than Abo Al-Khaseeb. In conclusion, the different habitats in Iraq showed to have a fundamental role for various bird species. More investigations are required to evaluate the habitat for this group of birds.

Keywords: Egyptian vulture, Raptors, Diversity, East Al-Hammar marshes, Abo Al Khaseeb.

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Introduction

Birds of prey play a fundamental ecological role in preserving and maintaining the ecological systems (Donazar et al. 2016). Arockianathan & Balasundaram (2016) pointed out that the sanitation practices of vultures emanate from their foraging behaviour are considered as main scavengers by eating the carcasses. In addition, these birds have less ability to spread the pathogens. However, Şen (2012) mentioned that all scavengers will undergo the highest rate of extinction of functional deficient by 2100. This has been evidently supported later by many investigations that emphasised that severe and continuous decline in population of raptors globally

(McClure & Rolek 2020). In Estonia, Väli et al. (2018) observed a reduction in the wintering and breeding population size of the Goshawk and Sparrow hawk. In general, the population trend of scavengers in Europe showed a stable trend owing to the endeavours of conservation managements; conversely, in Asia and Africa. The decline trend is continuous (Safford et al. 2019) e.g. in India, *Gyps bengalensis* has suffered from extreme population deterioration (Anoop et al. 2020).

The decline tendency in population size of bird of prey is occurred as a consequence of many influential drivers such as a worldwide hunting practices (Wacher et al. 2013; Nikolov et al. 2016), habitat