



**Report on Attendance of Conference on Biodiversity in Aqaba,
Amman, 20-23, Oct 2008.**

BIRD SECTION

Mudhafar A. Salim, Nature Iraq

Nature Iraq team participated in the Middle Eastern Biodiversity Conference that was held in Amman, Aqaba at 20-23, Oct 2008. The participation of the 14 staff of NI varied among participating with presentation (PowerPoint) that summarized each of their work over the KBAs project or other projects, or arranging and assisting in NI's photo exhibition that showed shots of various areas over the Lower Mesopotamian wetlands. The audience, who came from the Middle East countries and other international representatives, were very interested with what they heard of the team of Nature Iraq. "Great job!", "You did very well", "I was amazed to see what you've done!" ... etc, words that the team used to hear from the people who attended NI's session. 9 of NI's staff presented their works summarizing their results and discussions as follows:

1. Azzam alwash, *status of the Lower Mesopotamian marshlands.*
2. Anna Bachman, *Key Biodiversity Areas in Iraq, general overview.*
3. Mudhafar Salim, *Rapid assessment of birds of the Mesopotamian marshlands.*
4. Koresh Ararat, *Rapid assessment of birds of Kurdistan, north of Iraq.*
5. Ibrahim Abid, *Rapid assessment of fish of the Mesopotamian marshlands.*
6. Nabeel Hassan, *Habitat project in the national park.*
7. Muzhir Shibil, *Plants of the Lower Mesopotamian marshlands.*

8. Ghasaq Sabah, *Phytoplankton results of the marshes of Iraq.*
9. Muhammed Saffar, *Macro-benthic of wetlands of Kurdistan of Iraq.*

The Bird Session

As regards the bird session, the 1st presentation summarized the birdlife surveys over the Lower Mesopotamian wetlands since 2005 when the KBA project started. It showed the effect of the reflooding on the birdlife over these areas. Also, it showed some information about the threatened and the endemic bird species in the marshes, and the recommendation that should be taken into consideration for future conservational programs. The 2nd presentation summarized the results and discussion for 4 bird surveys that were held in Kurdistan of Iraq. Also, it showed the status of the birds, including the threatened species, in Kurdistan and the sites that were visited.



Regional panel during running the biodiversity session, photo, Lorna/NI

Following the presentation, a regional workshop was attended (Iraq, Turkey, Kuwait, Iran, KSA and Jordan), that discussed the recent status of the regional ongoing projects and the ways to coordinate the efforts on studying the biodiversity of the Middle East. Also the major regional problems were discussed (*following this session, a special session on the birds of the Middle East was held, see below*).

Nature Iraq Exhibit

As an initiative of Nature Iraq, an exhibit of bird, landscapes, and people of the marshlands were shown, this attracted so many attendees from various countries. Also, some of NI's products were showed (*Bird field guide, NI's brochures, NI's hats, in addition to poster*). The exhibit showed various stories from the marshlands, and how did



these areas get restored as water came back with the life to cover it again.

Part of Nature Iraq's exhibit, *photo, Lorna/NI*

The Final Bird Session

After having thorough idea of the biodiversity of the region in general, and regarding bird in particular; the conference get divided into specialized groups, and the Bird Group attended its own meeting to discuss the recent status, problems, and the proposed solutions to come up with the following recommendations:

- The session was labeled: ***“Good things are coming !”***.
- Increasing the regional involvement, and using the active media
- Creating a secretariat, forum, website, periodical publications, regional database ...
- Taking the “sensitive” issues into consideration when future planning (Israel).
- Sharing expertise among other specialized areas of action (other than birds).
- Encouraging the academic studies and funding the research proposals and the academic studies.
- Building capacity by training on monitoring, birdwatching and conservation actions.
- Inviting decision-makers and scientists to attend the regional biodiversity conferences.
- Creating human and financial base/recourses, and supporting the regional voluntary work.
- ... and so, the conference was ended!



Nature Iraq's brilliant team at the end of the Middle Eastern Biodiversity Conference

Photo, Lorna/NI