

A report of breeding of Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* in Iraq

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Salim *et al* (2012) noted that the Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* is a fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor in Iraq and that some remain in summer. It is a widespread breeder in Turkey, breeds in northwest and western Iran and there are feral breeding populations in Arabia (Porter & Aspinall 2010).

In February 2017, an ornithological survey was conducted in Chakkah marsh (31° 45' 4" N, 47° 26' 4" E, Missan province, Iraq) which is located south of Al Musharrh subdistrict and to the northwest of Hawizeh marshes (Figure 1). Having completed fieldwork and recording the waterfowl and terrestrial birds of the study area, an interview with a local hunter roaming the marshes was carried out. I asked him to give me an idea about the birds that he hunts in the marsh. He told me that he hunts various duck species and others. In early June 2016, he caught a female Mallard and its ten eggs using a net. He told me that he brought them to his house for incubation but needed to brood them under domestic chicken. Only 4 offspring survived. I accompanied him to his house in Al Gubbah village in the northwest of Chakkah marsh. I saw there the four Mallards (one male and three females, Plates 1, 2) living outside and swimming with some domestic ducks in a canal

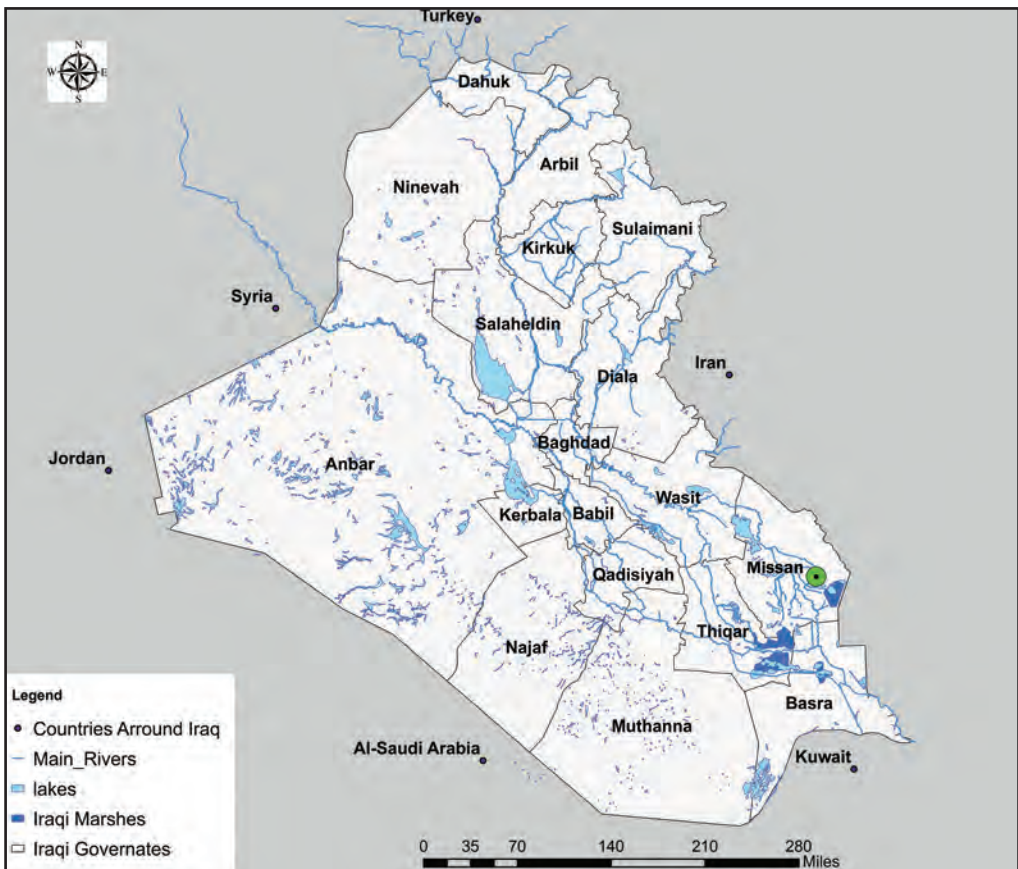


Figure 1. Map of Iraq. The green symbol shows the location of Chakkah marsh.



Plate 1. Sub-adult female Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* February 2017, Al-Gubbah village, Chakkah marsh, southern Iraq. © Laith Ali Al-Obeidi



Plate 2. Sub-adult female Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* February 2017, Al-Gubbah village, Chakkah marsh, southern Iraq. © Laith Ali Al-Obeidi

running in front of the house. As I tried to approach for photography they flew away instantly. The male and one female flew around the house but could not be photographed. They appeared wild and were extremely shy if anyone approached. The owner explained that they fly away for a day or more and then come back. The birds were sub-adults and seemed to be nine months old. The hunter's friend had found a nest with 12 eggs in summer 2015 in the same area but had failed to incubate the eggs.

Some locals do collect eggs or juveniles from marshes and rear them in their homes. This occurs most breeding seasons. Target species include African Darter *Anhinga rufa*, Pygmy Cormorant *Microcarbo pygmeus*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* and ducks.

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