

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## The Basra Reed Warbler saga: where is the original data?

Richard Porter *et al* (2015a, b) raised concerns about the validity of data, and subsequent conclusions, in Al-Sheikhly *et al* (2013), all published in *Zoology in the Middle East* (a 'Taylor & Francis' journal). Wider public criticisms and concerns emerged on blogs such as PubPeer and the OSME website. Concerns were also expressed in *British Birds* (6 May 2015, 'News and comment'), referring to the case as 'BasraReedWarblergate' and "An intriguing case of what appears to be modern-day ornithological fraud..." The formal concerns were reiterated by Kennerley *et al* (2015). Despite a commitment by Taylor & Francis to resolve the issues with this paper and investigate the complaints by application to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), interested and concerned parties, some of whom have called publicly on the retraction of this paper; have still not been able to access the raw data. Given the serious concerns raised about the ground-breaking findings of this research, it is somewhat surprising the authors have not been willing to provide their data for further scientific scrutiny. Similarly, it is somewhat disappointing that neither Taylor & Francis nor COPE have been able to verify that the data exists and is of sufficient

quality for the conclusions reached to be declared scientifically sound. The question remains, where is the original data?

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