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NEW SIGHTING OF THE WILD GOAT *CAPRA AEGAGRUS* (ERXLEBEN, 1777) IN NINEVEH PROVINCE, NORTHERN IRAQ

Ali N. Al-Barazengy* ♦, Adel O. Salman**, and Bushra A. Omar*

*Iraqi Ministry of Environment/ Center of Sustainable Management for Natural Ecosystem-
Biodiversity Unit.

**Iraqi Ministry of Environment/ Center of Sustainable Management for Natural Ecosystem-
Cites Unit.

♦Corresponding author: ali_bio_84@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the distribution range of wild goat *Capra aegagrus* (Erxleben, 1777) in Iraq with new sighting of very small herd of wild goat occur in Alqosh Mountain north of Nineveh province, where wild goat have a little informations on the distribution areas in Iraq according to the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Keywords: Bovidae, *Capra aegagrus*, distribution, North Iraq, Wild Mammals.

INTRODUCTION

Wild goat *Capra aegagrus* (Erxleben, 1777) is listed as vulnerable species according to the red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN. Its distribution includes the mountainous area from Afghanistan, Pakistan, to Anatolian mountains, Aegean Island Crete (Macar and Gurkan, 2009) west through Iran, western Turkmenistan, the Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, northeastern Georgia, and southern Russia), and its ranges widely in Turkey (Kence, 1987). In Arabia it found in the mountain ranges of Kurdistan north-eastern Iraq. It once occurred in Lebanon and Syria at Damascus; Aleppo and east of Homs- Hama railway, and palmyra, a one record from U.A.E. (Harrison and Bates, 1991) and Jordan but is now extinct in these countries (Grubb, 2005). In Iraq wild goat distributed many sites in the northern region, historically, bones of wild goat dating back to the eras Mousterian-age and Paleolithic deposits have been found in Hazar Mard caves near Sulaimaniya and Shanidar Cave near Erbil (Hatt, 1959). In the last century the information about the presence of wild goat were reported in mountain slopes near Zawitha, Sarsank and Amadiya in Dohuk province, Baradust mountain, Barzan, Zagarta mountain, Shaglawah, Harir Dagh, Rawanduz and individuals were been exposed to hunt and kill in Safin Dagh and Bekme Dam in Erbil province, recorded from Chemchemal and Derbendi Khan in Sulaimani province in Nineveh province the wild goat distributed throughout the mountainous in Berat Dagh and Bekme Gorge eastern Nineveh and was rare on Sinjar mountain western of the province, eastern Kirkuk provinces it was recorded in Zhnrgahta mountain on Suqrimah Dagh and in Jarmo on the foothills of Zagros Mountains (Hatt, 1959; Harrison and Bates, 1991).

Actually, the sites where the wild goat spotted northern Iraq during the last few years confined in Erbil province in Barzan area, Zararan area and in Sulaymaniyah province in Peramagroon, Qara Dagh and Dukan Lake (Haba, 2013; Raza, 2013) (Fig. 1).

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Wild goat inhabit the rocky slopes, gorges, wooded hills, coniferous and Mediterranean shrubland in medium altitude mountains (Aulagnier *et al.*, 2008), it has found in the Zagros Mountains in the extreme north and along the northeastern border with Iran (Shackleton, 1997), reside in the deciduous forests and thickets dense on steep rocky cliffs in the foothills of the rugged highlands in the ranges along the north-eastern borders of Iraq with Islamic Republic of Iran (Al-Sheikhly and Haba, 2014).

The wild goat have been exposed under decline in number because of excessive hunting (Hatt, 1959). Most populations are affected by the habitat destruction and disturbance during the previous conflict in the area, and according to the Kurdistan Regional Authorities, hunting of wild goat is forbidden since the 1990s. Despite this, some unsubstantiated reports of illegal hunting of Wild goat have been received (Al-Sheikhly, 2012). In this paper we review a new sighting of the wild goat in mountainous area northern Mosul province, in Alqosh Mountain which is considered a new site to the presence of wild goat there.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In spring of 2014 a survey conducted in Alqosh mountain located northern of Nineveh province, eastern of each Mosul dam- Lake and the main road that connects the Mosul city and Dohuk province, it is a mountainous area stretching to the north and east towards of Dohuk province, the southern and western part of which is a flat plains mostly agricultural land.

A Canon 450D camera body resolution approximate 12MP was used to pick many animals pictures including wild goat. The camera equipped with lens Canon EF 400mm f/5.6L USM Super Telephoto to get a close-up and clear photos. The landscapes captured with mobile camera sony xperia Z1 also Nikon travelite V binocular 8*25 5.6° used to watch remotely the wild goat in caves and cliffs, the site locations (longitude, latitude amplitude and elevation) recorded by Garmin eTrex GPS device.

Wild goats were diagnosed depending on group of mammal field guides which are (Hatt, 1959; Harrison and Bates, 1991; Aulagnier, *et al.*, 2008; Al-Sheikhly and Haba, 2014).

The Google Earth program from © Google 2014 was used to dropping the coordinates of the sites which recently the wild goat found in, and review a satellite image to the new site of wild goat which we found in.

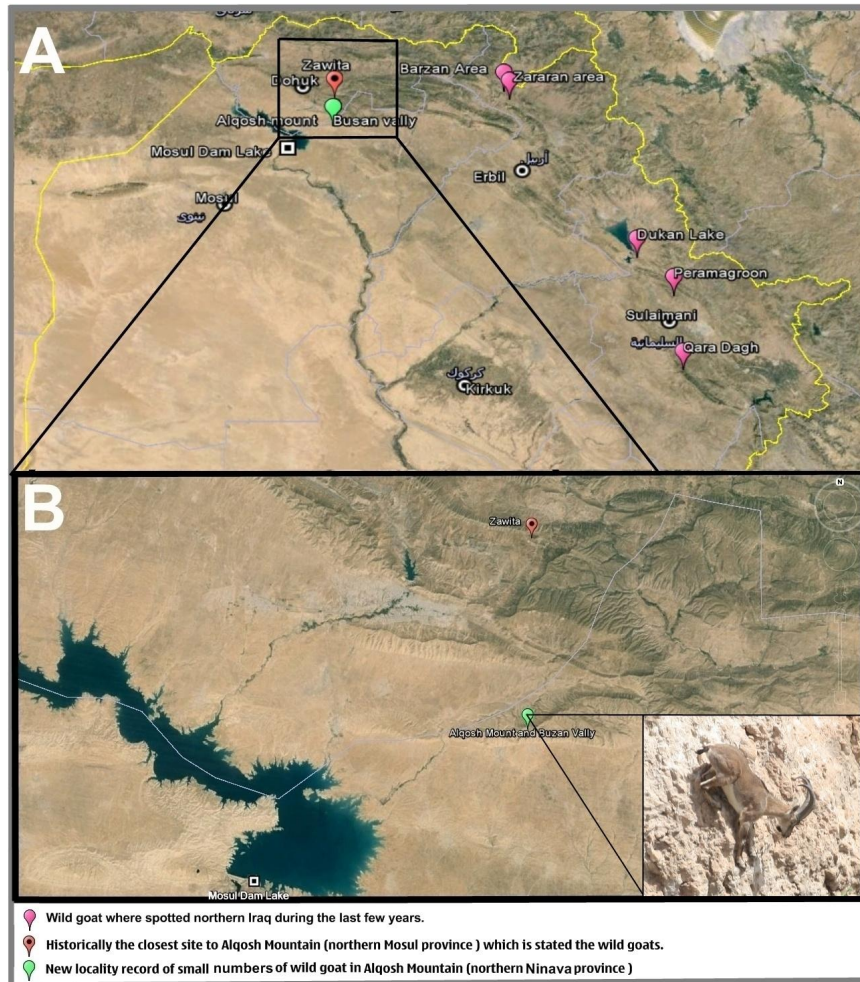


Fig. 1: Map of northern Iraq showing new locality of Wild goat *Capra aegagrus* in northern of Nineveh province

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In spring of 2014 specifically 21-22 may, a survey was conducted by the Iraqi Ministry of Environment to study the biodiversity in Alqosh mountain (N: 36.74939 ° ; E 43.11673 °) approximately 46 kilometers northern of Mosul city and to the east of Mosul Dam Lake. In Alqosh Mountain (2.5 km northeast of the city Alqosh) there is a religious, archaeological and cultural site is the Hermz Monastery which was the last point accessible by car. The survey conducted by foot to the Eastern, Western side and the summit of Alqosh Mount (elevation approximately *c.* 1006m) with the assistance of the department monastery and locals of Alqosh city.

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Alqosh Mountain is a nature habitat for many fauna which inhabits the cliffs and the caverns in the mountain, the area exploits of herding sheep.

There were two Mountains in the area which were Alqosh Mountain and Buzan Mountain, separates by a great valley called Buzan Valley. The valley provides cliffs and many suitable natural shelters especially small caverns, a small number of wild goats up to six individuals were observed on the cliffs and hiding inside the caverns in the northern side of a rocky cliff facing a deep wooded valley (Buzan Valley) (N: 36.7526°; E: 43.12179°). There were no previous estimate or precise count of the wild goat population present in the site; however, the locals indicated that there were more wild goat may present.

Historically, the closest area known with wild goat is Zawita (Hatt, 1959) (N: 36.910145°; E 43.129049°) to the north of Nineveh province which is located 20 km to the north of Alqosh. However, Alqosh represents a new site for the wild goat in northern Iraq which lies almost in the western edge of the previous known range of the species.

The locals noted that the wild goat was found in the Alqosh Mountain in abundance and since old time, but it exposed to over hunting made a decline of its populations in the area, these few individuals are what remains of the herds that existed previously.

There was a high probability that wild goat breeding in the caverns in Alqosh Mountain which were suitable places for breeding and this was what we observed that one female hiding in the cavern may be pregnant, which is evident by the size of its belly (Fig. 2), as well as the survey had conducted at an appropriate time for breeding in a May, mid-spring.



Fig. 2: Two wild goats *Capra aegagrus* one of them a female hiding in a small cave in Buzan Valley (in the cliff of Alqosh Mountain) northern of Nineveh province, Iraq.



Fig. 3: Tow Mountains, Alqosh Mountain and Buzan Mountain on the opposite side separated by Buzan Valley, Buzan Mountain appears in the opposite side in the picture.



Fig. 4: Adult male wild goat *Capra aegagrus* with other individuals located in new site northern of Mosul province, Iraq. (Photographs by Ali N. Al-Barazengy)

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مشاهدة جديدة للماعز الجبلي (*Capra aegagrus* (Erxleben, 1777)) في محافظة

نينوى في شمال العراق

*علي نعمة البرزنجي، **عادل عمران سلمان و*بشرى عادل عمر

*وزارة البيئة / مركز الإدارة المستدامة للنظم البيئية الطبيعية / شعبة التنوع الاحيائي

**وزارة البيئة / مركز الإدارة المستدامة للنظم البيئية الطبيعية / شعبة سايتس

الخلاصة

يستعرض هذا البحث مناطق الانتشار الجغرافي للماعز الجبلي *Capra aegagrus* (Erxleben, 1777) في العراق وعرض تسجيل جديد لموقع تتواجد فيه مجموعة صغيرة من الماعز الجبلي في جبل القوش شمال محافظة نينوى، حيث يفتقر الماعز الجبلي إلى وفرة المعلومات حول مناطق انتشاره في العراق. أدرج الماعز الجبلي كنوع معرض لخطر الانقراض و بحسب القائمة الحمراء Red list للاتحاد الدولي لصون الطبيعة IUCN .