

## Gara Mountain & Garagu (IQ007)

Dohuk–37.010833°N 43.365°E

KBA Criteria: **V**

IBA Criteria: **A1 and A3**

IPA Criteria: **A4, B1, and B2b**

Area: **10447ha** - Altitude: **716-2053 m**

Ecoregion: **Zagros Mountains Forest Steppe (PA0446)**

Status: **Unprotected**



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**Site Description:** Two sub-sites are contained in this area Gara Mountain and Garagu. The overall main habitat types found were mountain forest vegetation (primarily oak forests) and mountain riverine forest. The site is located in the Zagros mountain range, where the geology is siltstone and sandstone, and the soil type is sandy clay. About 60% of the area near the streams was unvegetated.

The town of Chamanke, located in an area of valleys and farmlands, is within the western edge of the delineated site. The Mani Maze Stream flowing near Chamanke is used as a source of water by the villages of Meze, Baramuinke, Kharinke and Bebad Islam and for the Shirin Bottled Water factory in

Chamanke. The site is a popular tourist destination for residents of the nearby city of Dohuk. The towns of Tajilka and Ashawa are located in the northwest, where there are two streams (both former water quality sampling sites). Ashawa is a public resort. One of Saddam Hussein's former palaces is located inside the western edge of the delineation, and according to media reports in 2012 there is interest in developing the palace as a tourist site.

Garagu consists of a gorge, with a stream flowing through it, in a rocky part area of the Gara Range. The villages of Garagu, Babire, KaniBalar, Kala Shikho and Warmel are nearby. It is a popular picnicking site.

Key Biodiversity Area Criteria	Notes	
<b>V. Vulnerability Criteria: Presence of Critically Endangered and Endangered species – presence of a single individual or Vulnerable species – 30 individuals or 10 pairs.</b>		
<i>Neurergus crocatus</i>	Observed and photographed by team at Garagu.	
<b>Important Bird Area Criteria</b>	<b>Observations made 2007-2010.</b>	
<b>A1. Globally threatened species</b>	<b>Breeding</b>	<b>Wintering/ Passage</b>
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> (Summer visitor)	1 pair	
<b>A3. Biome-restricted species</b>		
<b>Mediterranean biome</b>	<b>Breeding</b>	<b>Wintering/ Passage</b>
Masked Shrike <i>Lanius nubicus</i> (Summer visitor)	25 pairs (2009-2010)	
Sombre Tit <i>Poecile lugubris</i> (Resident)	60 pairs (2007, 2009 and 2010)	
Western Rock Nuthatch <i>Sitta neumayer</i> (Resident)	170 pairs (2008-2010)	
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear <i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i> (Summer visitor)	150 pairs (2007 and 2010)	
Black-headed Bunting <i>Emberiza melanocephala</i> (Summer visitor)	350 pairs (2007, 2009 and 2010)	

**Important Plant Area Criteria**

**A4. Site contains national endemic, near endemic, regional endemic and/or regional range-restricted species or infraspecific taxa**

**Note: \*historically recorded; \*\*historically recorded and seen on recent surveys**

Endemics recorded in this area include: \**Centaurea longipedunculata*, \**Delphinium micranthum*, \*\**Linum velutinum*, *Onosma albo-roseum* var. *macrocalycinum*, and \**Satureja metastashiantha*

Near endemics recorded in this area include: \**Astracantha crenophila*, \**Campanula radula*, \**Centaurea gigantea*, \**Globularia sintenisii*, \**Michauxia nuda*, \**Picris strigosa* subsp. *kurdica*, \**Stachys kotschyii*, \**Viola pachyrrhiza*, \**Ziziphora clinopodioides* subsp. *kurdica*

Five nationally rare species include: *Asyneuma amplexicaule*, *Briza minor*, *Cosinia cymbolepis*, *Linum velutinum* (also endemic), *Quercus macranthera* and *Rubus caesius*.

**B1. The site is a particularly species-rich example of a defined habitat type**

Mountain Forest Vegetation-Oak Forest-Lowest & Medium Sub-zones habitat type and Mountain Forest Vegetation-Mountain Riverine Forest habitat type

**B2b. The site is a refuge for: biogeographically and bioclimatically restricted plants to ‘retreat to’ in the face of global climate change.**

This site represents a good example of Mountain Forest Vegetation- Oak Forest-Low, Medium, and Highest Zone habitat types. The top of mountain and some gorges/cliffs in the mountain can act as a refuge site for Oak forests and associated plants in the case of significant climate change.

**Additional Important Bird Observations:** A total of 60 species was observed during the surveys. Also four Irano-Turanian and one Eurasian Steppe and Desert biome-restricted species were breeding.

**Other Important Fauna:** Data were collected only in 2010. Significant mammals reported by locals at the site were Syrian Brown Bear *Ursus arctos syriacus*. Significant reptile found at the site was Anatolian Lizard *Apathya cappadocica urmiana*. A significant amphibian found at the site was the globally Vulnerable Azerbaijan Newt *Neurergus crocatus*. No fish samples were collected.

**Additional Plant & Habitat Information:** This site contains a good population of *Crataegus azarolus* and *Pistacia eurycarpa*, which are economically and culturally important.

**Conservation Issues:** Tourism has a very high impact and related pollution was high. Agriculture is not extensive and mainly concentrated near Ashawa and Tajilka town and the valleys near the streams. There are small dams on both these streams, forming small lakes that have impacted

the ecological conditions of the area. At Ashawa sub-site, where water comes from a spring on Gara Mountain, a village above is dumping sewage to the waterway. There are also landmines in the Chamanke area. Over the last three years road construction has occurred over a large part of the Amedi valley (IQ008) to the northeast and transportation corridors leading to and within the site were a high threat.

**Recommendations:** Many endemic and rare plant species are present and give this site special priority as a potential protected area. Trash and recycling services should be extended to this site, particularly to popular picnic areas and awareness-raising activities can be focused in these places. Minefield removal remains a priority for the area as well as better transportation planning and construction methods.

