

Halgurd Mountain (IQ017)

Erbil – 36.729722°N 44.884444°E

KBA Criteria: **V**

IBA Criteria: **A3**

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

Area: **6393 ha** - Altitude: **1272-3613 m**

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

Status: **Unprotected**



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Site Description: Halgurd Mountain is considered by many to be Iraq's highest peak at approximately 3613 m though a nearby peak Cheekha Dar or Black Tent (36.775278°N 44.918611°E) may also be a contender (Wikipedia, 2012; CIA 2012). Halgurd is part of the Hasarost (or Hasār-i Rōst) Mountain Range (itself part of the Zagros Range) near the Iranian border. The mountain retains some snow throughout the summer. Despite the fact that many places on the mountain are heavily mined, the slopes are used for summer grazing. A number of villages at lower elevations grow vegetables and raise

livestock.

Two key habitats surveyed here are mountain forest vegetation—thorn-cushion vegetation and alpine zone vegetation. The geology of the mountain consists of basic igneous rock, radiolarian chert, siliceous and calcareous shale, and metamorphic schist and limestone of unknown age, and the soil types are serpentine, sandy clay, and clay. The non-vegetated area was about 50% of the site.

Key Biodiversity Area Criteria	Notes	
V. Vulnerability Criteria: Presence of Critically Endangered and Endangered species – presence of a single individual or Vulnerable species – 30 individuals or 10 pairs.		
<i>Testudo graeca</i>	One pair (also seen previously in 2008 & 2009) and there is suitable habitat for this species.	
<i>Neurergus crocatus</i>	Observed in 2009	
Important Bird Area Criteria	Observations were made in Summer 2009 only	
A3. Biome-restricted species		
Irano-Turanian biome	Breeding	Wintering/ Passage
See-see Partridge <i>Ammoperdix griseogularis</i> (Resident)	3 pairs (count 2009)	
Menetries's Warbler <i>Sylvia mystacea</i> (Summer visitor)	2 pairs (count 2009)	
Eastern Rock Nuthatch <i>Sitta tephronota</i> (Resident)	5 pairs (count 2009)	
White-throated Robin <i>Irania gutturalis</i> (Resident)	8 pairs (count 2009)	
Kurdistan Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe xanthopyrna</i>)	4 pairs (count 2009)	
Finsch's Wheatear <i>Oenanthe finschii</i> (Resident)	2 pairs (count 2009)	
Eastern Cinereous Bunting <i>Emberiza semenowi</i> (Summer visitor)	6 pairs (count 2009)	
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 for this site include: **Alchemilla kurdica*, **Allium. calocephalum*, **Alyssum penjwinense*, ***Astragalus helgurdensis*, **A. porphyrodon*, **Cousinia carduchorum*, **Delphinium micranthum*, **Leutea rechingeri*, **Onosma cornuta*, **Rhynochorys elephas subsp. carduchorum*, **Satureja metastashiantha*, **Scrophularia atroglandulosa*, **S. gracilis*, ***Tulipa kurdica*, and **Vitis hissarica subsp. rechingeri*.
 Near endemics found at the site include: **Allium argirdense*, **Bunium cornigerum*, **Carex iraqensis*, **Centaurea urvillei subsp. deinacantha*, **Colpodium gillettii*, **Cousinia algurdina*, **C. leptolepis*, **Nepeta elymaitica*, **N. wettsteinii*, **Rosularia rechingeri*, **Tragopogon bornmuelleri*, and **Veronica davisii*.

Nationally rare species found at this site are: *Primula auriculata*, *Ranunculus bulbilliferus*, *Scilla siberica*, *Silene pungens*, *S. rynchocarpa*, *S. commelinifolia*, *Tulipa buhseana*, and *Veronica beccabunga*

B1. Site is a particularly species-rich example of defined habitat type

Mountain Forest Vegetation—Thorn-Cushion Vegetation habitat type and Alpine Zone Vegetation 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 the Thorn-Cushion Vegetation habitat type. The top of the mountain can provide refuge for Thorn-Cushion plant species. Also some gorges/cliffs on the mountain can provide refuge for Oak forests and associated plants in the case of climate change.

Important Bird Observations: During the survey 33 species were observed. The site held breeding populations of three Mediterranean and one Eurasian High-Montane biome-restricted species but did not trigger inclusion under criterion A3. No additional non-avian fauna observations were made and while there are important alpine and mountain streams no fish surveys were conducted.

Additional Plant & Habitat Information: This site contains a good population of *Allium akaka*, which is important as a traditional food as well as a good population of *Rheum ribes*, which is economically important.

Conservation Issues: Although threats to the area were generally assessed as low, the extensive presence of land mines is considered a high threat. There is also a high level of hunting. There are vegetable farms in the villages surrounding Halgurd Mountain operating on a small scale that could prove a threat if expanded. Garbage and trash dumps have been reported and may represent a higher threat than was observed in the KBA Surveys.

Recommendations: Halgurd Mountain is a very important for plants because it includes several regional endemic, near endemic and locally rare species. Their presence gives this site special priority. Much of the area is part of the proposed Halgurd-Sakran Park and park staff as well as other local stakeholders should be involved in management planning for this site.

