



Memorandum of Understanding  
on the Conservation of  
Migratory Birds of Prey in  
Africa and Eurasia

14 March 2015

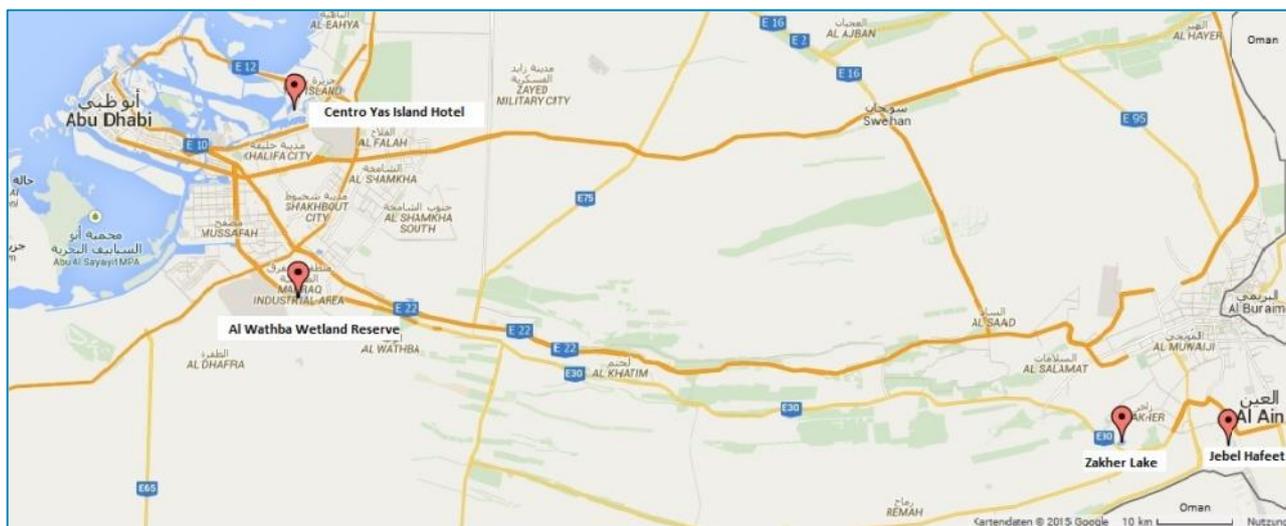
## Field Trip for Participants of the Second Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG2) to the Raptors MoU

### Introduction

Participants of TAG2 are invited to join a day-long Field Trip on Wednesday 18 March 2015. Transport will be in a bus that will leave at **0630 hours** (sharp) from outside the Centro Yas Island Hotel and return to the same location at approximately 1900 hours. A complimentary buffet lunch will be provided at the Hotel Mercure. Stout shoes or boots are recommended, as is protection from the often harsh sun, including a hat and sunglasses.

The main aim is to provide delegates with an opportunity to interact in an informal setting and to experience some of the desert habitats and raptor riches of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The plan is to visit three separate locations (see notes below): Al Wathba Wetland Reserve near Abu Dhabi; Zakher Lake near Al Ain; and, Jebel Hafeet also near Al Ain and close to the border with Oman. The sites have been selected to provide participants with an opportunity to observe a range of different habitats and bird species.

It is hoped that the following birds of prey may be seen during the day: Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) and Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*). But in mid-March spring migration is well underway so several other species are possible, including harriers, eagles, buzzards, kites and falcons.



Map showing approximate location of sites to be visited during the TAG2 Field Trip.

The most commonly used Field Guide for the region is *The Birds of the Middle East* by Richard Porter *et al.* A copy will be available for reference. An up-to-date Checklist of the Birds of UAE can be found here: <http://uaebirding.com/uaechecklist.html>.



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## Al Wathba Wetland Reserve

Established in 1988 by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Al Wathba Wetland Reserve is a complex of surface water bodies, both natural and man-made, around 40 km southeast of central Abu Dhabi. It was declared a Ramsar site in 2013.

Al Wathba Wetland Reserve covers a total area of five square kilometres, comprising wetlands, sabkhas (salt flats), fossilized sands and dunes. The presence of so many different habitats and types of vegetation within one compact area has attracted many different forms of life. More than 250 species of birds have been seen, along with an abundance of aquatic life, as well as 37 plant species.

Al Wathba also features a rich variety of dragonflies and damselflies. But its greatest attraction is its population of Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*). As many as 4,000 individuals spend the winter at the site. Even when the majority return to Central Asia for the summer months, they still leave behind a residual resident population. In July 2013, the flamingo colony successfully hatched 231 chicks.

Recent on-site construction includes a bird hide and two marked walking trails (1.5 and 3 km). Further information can be found at: <http://www.ead.ae/al-wathba-wetland-2/>

## Zakher Lake

Zakher Lake (also known as Al Qusais and previously called Zakher Pools) is a relatively recent man-made water body situated on the outskirts of Al Ain in the Eastern Region of Abu Dhabi Emirate. It was unintentionally created in 2006 by treated waste water being released onto land, which pushed up groundwater levels and eventually resulted in the formation of a lake.

The lake and shoreline ecosystems have enabled reeds and shallow-water plants to develop. The plants have attracted insects uncommon to the desert environment, and significant numbers of migratory birds have begun to use the lake. Nearly 200 different species of bird have been seen at the lake, including a few species that now nest at the site.

## Jebel Hafeet

Jebel Hafeet (also transcribed as Jabal, Jabel and Jebal) is a mountain situated on the outskirts of Al Ain. Part of the formation straddles the border with Oman, but the summit is within the United Arab Emirates. The mountain rises to 1,249 metres (4,098 ft) and offers an impressive view over Al Ain city and the surrounding desert.

Jebel Hafeet has been a well-known landmark throughout the area's history and is a contemporary tourist attraction. An extensive natural cave system winds through the mountain and at the foothills lies Green Mubazarrah, a well-developed tourist attraction.

As of March 2015, 134 species of birds have been recorded on Jebel Hafeet with the gardens of the Mercure Hotel being the hotspot for the site. The mountain is also home to a wide range of animals including bats, foxes and snakes.