

Short Communication**First Record of the Eastern Black-Winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus vociferus* in Syria**Ahmad E. Aidek^{1*} and Ehab Jbr²¹General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research, Deir ez-Zor, ² Tell Al-Darah, Salamiyah, Syria.*Received: June 3, 2023; Accepted: June 12, 2023*

Abstract: The present note provides a first documented record of the Eastern Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* from Syria. An updated map of its current distribution across Syria is provided.

Keywords: Syria, Black-winged Kite, birds of prey.

The Black-winged Kite (Figure 1) is widespread in the countries of the Middle East; around Syria, Iraq (Salim, 2002), Turkey (Karakaş and Biricik, 2017), Lebanon (Ramadan-Jaradi; *et al.*, 2020) and Jordan (Khoury; *et al.*, 2017). This species was not listed in the checklist of the Syrian birds (Murdoch and Betton 2008) or in other publications on the birds of Syria covering Deir ez-Zor, Palmyra, and the lower reaches of the Euphrates (Aidek, 2010; Murdoch, 2010; Murdoch and Aidek, 2012).

Field observations were recorded over the past 14 years from several sites in Syria (Table 1, Figure 2). A total of 22 observations were documented since 2009-2023 for the Eastern Black-winged Kite along the coast region and the Orontes basin, the lower Euphrates and the most southwestern region of the country (Figure 2). Due to security constraints, the possibility to conduct field work became impossible.

Locals and hunters have posted photos of this bird on social media platforms (i.e. Facebook) inquiring about the nature of this species that was rare and infrequently observed. It seems that the Black-winged Kite spread across Syria from three directions, Iraq from the east, Turkey from the north and Jordan from the south (Figure 2). It also appears from dates of observations that this bird is a winter visitor, as the dates indicates (September to February) with two observations in March. Despite that it is considered as a breeding bird in Turkey (Karakaş and Biricik, 2017), Iraq (Salim, 2002), and Jordan (Khoury; *et al.*, 2017), its breeding status has not been confirmed yet in Syria.

In Syria, the Black-winged Kite is under the pressure of hunting or capturing as most other birds of prey. Locals believe that this species can be sold at high prices as other raptors. Capturing birds of prey in Syria increased tremendously over the past years due to economic pressure among the most of the Syrian society sectors.

Public awareness is urgently needed to protect this species in Syria, and further studies are required to better understand its biology, habitat preference and breeding status in Syria.

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Table 1: Sites, geographic coordinator, and dates of recorded of Black-winged Kite.

Regions	Sites	Geographic Coordinator	Date		
Lower Euphrates	Abu Kamal	34.4589724, 40.9180437	Nov. 2009	Sep. 2018	
	Hajeen	34.6865759, 40.8570163	Oct. 2020		
	Abu Hamam	34.8522053, 40.7305936	Oct. 2020		
	Jabla	35.3614549, 35.9327176	Feb. 2020	Nov. 2022	
	Banias	35.1783723, 35.9464267	Nov. 2020		
	Mesiaf	35.0654766, 36.3514943	Sep. 2021	Mar. 2022	Oct. 2022
Coast region and Orontes basin	Safita	34.8204211, 36.1224387	Dec. 2021	Oct. 2021	
	Latakia	35.5357735, 35.8430024	Oct. 2022		
	Al-Sqeilbiyeh	35.3638303, 36.3962891	Nov. 2021		
	Mhardeh	35.2501077, 36.5803132	Jan. 2023		
	Homs	34.723876, 36.7223178	Feb. 2021		
	Tell Al-Darah	35.0310412, 36.9438673	Nov. 2021	Dec. 2021	
Southwest region	Sweida	32.7081434, 36.5622998	Feb. 2012	Mar. 2020	
	Daraa	32.6242823, 36.1144943	Dec. 2022		
	Tseil	32.8341612, 35.99134	Feb. 2023		

**Figure 1.** Black-winged Kite from Tell Al-Darah, Syria (Photo by Ehab Jbr).

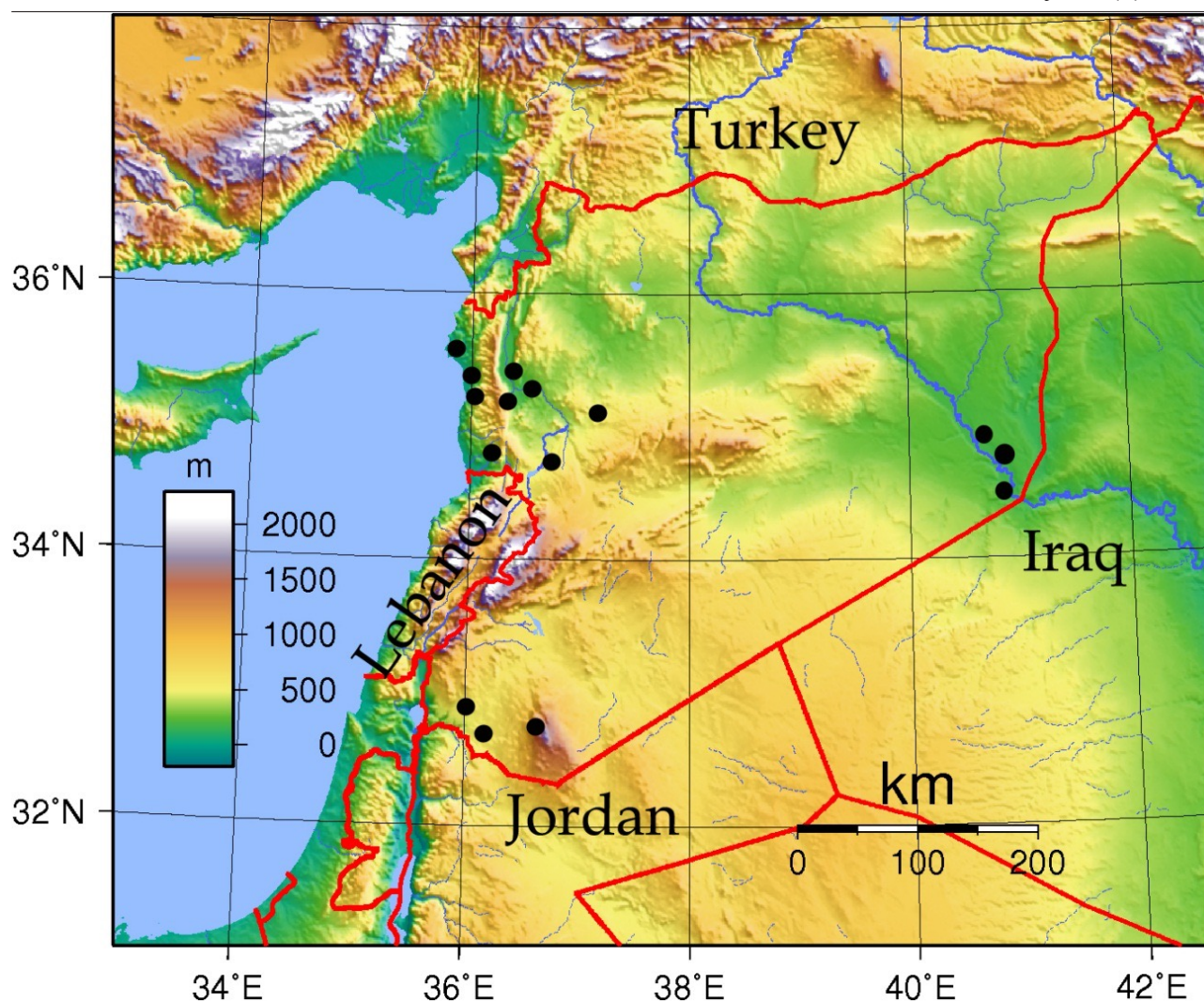


Figure 2. Distribution of Eastern Black-winged Kite in Syria.

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