

A fraudulent study on the breeding biology of the endangered Basra Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*

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Abstract

Background: Fraudulent studies in peer-reviewed journals are contaminating the academic record. They therefore need to be retracted. This article examines allegations of fraud in a field study on the breeding biology of the Basra Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*, an endangered bird species which is almost exclusively breeding in Iraq. Methods: The study was published in July 2013 in 'Zoology in the Middle East', a peer-reviewed journal of publisher Taylor & Francis (TF). The journal was informed in September 2013 that the study was not based on validated facts. TF is since 2016 in the possession of two reports with investigations about the veracity of the study. I present and discuss, (a) the main findings of both reports, (b) relevant information collected later on, and (c) comments from stakeholders and others on (a) and (b). Results: Numerous efforts in 2015-2021 to get the raw research data were unsuccessful. There is no evidence that they exist. Several experts have confirmed that the study is based on fraud. TF, the journal and others have not provided experts with opposing views. TF, the journal and others have not provided rebuttals of the main findings of both reports. The first author, responsible for collecting all field data, has indicated that he is willing to retract the study. Conclusions: The Basra Reed-Warbler study is based on fraud and publisher TF does not take its responsibility to maintain the integrity of the academic record. The present article highlights the wish of many scientists that it becomes mandatory for all articles in all Web of Science journals that the raw data are available for all readers.

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