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Epiphytic diatoms of the Mesopotamian wetland: Huwaiza marsh, South Iraq

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Abstract

The present work provides a first insight into the structure of epiphytic diatom assemblages inhabiting some dominant vegetation of the Huwaiza marsh, which is one of the most ecologically important wetlands in the Middle East. A total of 74 taxa belonging to 38 genera were recorded, of which *Cocconeis placentula* var. *euglypta* and *Fragilaria pulchella* predominate. Epiphytic diatom assemblages in Huwaiza marsh are a mixture of truly freshwater taxa (oligohalobous, 39%), brackish water taxa (mesohalobous, 33%) and marine forms (polyhalobous, 12%). Marine taxa have probably been transported into the marsh from the sea.

**Key index words:** Epiphytic diatoms, ecological preference, Mesopotamia, Huwaiza marsh, Iraq