

This sheet is compiled with data from the period that Kazakhstan was a USSR state.

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

23-03-1997

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Republic of Kazakhstan

3. Name of wetland: Kourgaldzhin and Tengiz Lakes

4. Geographical coordinates: 50°27'N 69°10'E

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.) 300-400 m

6. Area: (in hectares) 260,500 ha

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

The lakes lie in an extensive group of depressions in the north of Kazakhstan. These depressions contain shallow lakes (3-4 m), with a varied mineral composition, a fluctuating water level and no outflow. Lake Tengiz is a saltwater lake, almost devoid of aquatic vegetation. Lake Kourgaldzhin comprises a network of deep water channels with varying degrees of salinity and a rich aquatic vegetation. The lakes are important as breeding, moulting and resting stations for migratory bird species.

8. Wetland Type (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex I of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

marine-coastal: A . B . C . D . E . F . G . H . I . J . K

inland: L . M . N . O . P . Q . R . Sp . Ss . Tp . Ts
. U . Va . Vt . W . Xf . Xp . Y . Zg . Zk

man-made: 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . 5 . 6 . 7 . 8 . 9

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant: P Q Ss

9. Ramsar Criteria: (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12, next page.)

1a . 1b . 1c . 1d | 2a . 2b . 2c . 2d | 3a . 3b . 3c | 4a . 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site: 3a, 2c

10. Map of site included? Please tick **yes** -or- **no**

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

Please provide additional information on each of the following categories by attaching extra pages (please limit extra pages to no more than 10):

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page. (Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document).

1a: Kourgaldzhin and Tengiz lakes are good examples of saltwater lakes characteristic for the north of Kazakhstan.

2a: The globally threatened species *Oxyura leucocephala* is a regular summer visitor to the lakes, and the USSR red-data species *Phoenicopterus ruber* breeds there in large numbers.

2c: 10,000 to 14,000 pairs of *Phoenicopterus ruber* breed at the lakes.

3a: The lakes regularly support over 20,000 waterfowl.

13. General location: (include the nearest large town and its administrative region)

The lakes are situated in the Tselinograd district, north-east of the Aral Sea in the north of Kazakhstan.

14. Physical features: (e.g. geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

The two lakes lie within a group of depressions, that contain shallow lakes (3-4 m depth). The lakes don't have an outflow. Their water levels depend on the inflow from the Noura and Koulanou-Tpes rivers, sluices on the dams across the rivers, the amount of flooding, and the evaporation rates. The lake water has a varied mineral composition, particularly sulphates and chlorides. Tengiz is a saltwater lake of 156,000 ha. The water level has fallen leaving vast mud and alluvial flats between the water and the original lake edge. The lake floor is covered with a thick layer of silt.

Kourgaldzhin Lake is a lake of 39,600 ha with varying degrees of salinity. It comprises a network of deep water channels (0.5-2.5 m). It supports a rich aquatic vegetation.

The average temperature in January is -17°C, in June it is 20°C, the number of days with an average temperature below zero is 150 days per year.

15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

no information available

16. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

Lake Tengiz is almost devoid of aquatic vegetation. At Lake Kourgaldzhin the aquatic vegetation is very rich, and there are large zoö- and phytoplankton populations and fish fauna. On the shores and in the shallower waters reeds grow, and the lakeside vegetation consists of bunch-grass steppe.

17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc)

There is no information on vegetation around Lake Tengiz. The vegetation at and around Lake Kourgaldzhin comprises reedbeds with *Phragmites communis*. At the lakeside the grasses *Stigma lessingiana*, *Agropyron repens*, *Bromus inermis*, *Festuca sulcata* and *Calamagrostis epigeios* grow, as well as the flowering plants *Pyrethrum achilleifolium*, *Spiraea hypericifolia*, wormwoods *Artemisia* spp., *Halocnemum strobilaceum* and orache *Atriplex cana*.

18. Noteworthy fauna: (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.)

The lakes are of great importance as breeding, moulting and resting stations for wildfowl during their migration in the northern desert zone. The wetland is the main nesting site for 10,000-14,000 pairs of greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*), which is listed in the USSR Red Data Book (information of Carp, 1987). The 20,000 other breeding birds include black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*) with 2,000 pairs, common gull (*L. canus*) with 800-900 pairs, greater black-backed gull (*L. ichthyaetus*) with 350 pairs, common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) with 1,500 pairs and mute swan (*Cygnus olor*) with 200 pairs.

Other non-breeding summer visitors include shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), ruddy shelduck (*T. ferruginea*) and white-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*). The site is a moulting refuge for numerous non-breeding birds including 9,000 greater flamingo, 3,000 mute swan, wigeon, pintail, gadwall, pochard and greylag goose (*Anas penelope*, *A. acuta*, *A. strepera*, *Aythya ferina* and *Anser anser*). Many thousands of birds (mainly wigeon and pintail) pass through the area on their spring and autumn migration.

19. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)

There probably is some non-consumptive recreation in the accessible part of the site, and some hunting is allowed in that same part.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site: State of Kazakhstan

(b) surrounding area: no information available

21. Current land use:

(a) site: in the area around Lake Kourgaldzhin all activities are prohibited except research, and in the area around Lake Tengiz there is some hunting, hay cultivation and some unspecified exploitation of natural resources.

(b) surroundings/catchment: no information available

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

(a) at the site: Pollution of inflowing water from the city of Timirtau is threatening the water quality of the site, and therefore its ecological character. The management of water control structures (sluices, dams) built some years ago. Occasionally they fail to operate correctly.

(b) around the site: no information available

23. Conservation measures taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented)

The site has been declared a Zapovednik (state nature reserve) in the late 1980s or early 1990s. At Kourgaldzhin Zapovednik all activities including tourism are prohibited. This concerns 237,100 ha of the Ramsar site. In the other 23,400 ha hunting is restricted and exploitation of natural resources is controlled in accordance with conservation of the wetland as a waterfowl habitat.

The site used to have an area of 193,000 ha, but around 1981 it was enlarged to the current 260,500 ha.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

The Kazakh Academy of Science is working on recommendations for the management of the site, including water level control.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)

Studies have been made of the ecosystem and of waterfowl populations, but no date is mentioned (Carp, 1987). Laboratory facilities and boats are available for research.

26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)

no information available

27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)

In the Kourgaldzhin Zapovednik (protected area of 237,100 ha) no recreation or tourism are allowed. In the other part of the site (23,400 ha) some tourism is allowed.

28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)

Main Department of Zapovedniks and Game Management
Republic of Kazakhstan

29. Management authority: (name and address of local body directly responsible for managing the wetland)

Main Department of Zapovedniks and Game Management
Republic of Kazakhstan

30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only)

Andrusenko, N. and Zhulii, V. (1978). *Riches of the Kourgaldzhin Zapovednik*. Okhota I okhotn. khozyaistvo 9: 2-4.

Anon. (1980) National Report of the USSR for the *Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, Cagliari, Italy, 24-29 November 1980*.

Kovshar, A. (1982). Kourgaldzhin Zapovednik. In *Zapovednoe delo v Kazakhstane*. Alma Ata, pp. 57-63.

IUCN (1987). *Directory of Wetlands of International Importance*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland

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