

Additional information

General ecological features

A large part of the Birveta floodplain has been converted into aquaculture ponds. The Birveta aquaculture pond complex includes man-made and natural wetlands – a large network of functioning fishponds and adjacent valley of the Birveta Rivers with wide seasonally flooded meadows. Some ponds have small islands, and abundant mudflats form on the partly drained ponds. Fishponds are the only type of inland wetlands in the region with such habitats. Aquatic vegetation characteristic of eutrophic water bodies covers most parts of the ponds. Large areas of ponds are overgrown with *Typha angustifolia*. Dikes of ponds are overgrown with *Dauco-Melilotion* communities.

Ecosystem services

Hydrological values

In the hydrographical respect, the territory is located between the Svyla, Kamoja, Birveta and Dysna Rivers (in the Western Dvina (Daugava) basin). The length of the Dysna River is 173 km (58 km in Lithuania), area of the basin – 8,180 km². The Dysna River is 20 m wide and 1,7 m deep. Its flow speed is 0.1 m/s, mean run-off – 39,9 m³/s. The length of the Birveta River - 36,4 km (area of the basin – 1,607 km²) and its mean run-off – about 4 m³/s. The Birveta River is 18–25 m wide and 1,5–2,5 m deep. Both rivers are slow-flowing, overgrown with aquatic vegetation, and have flat wet valleys that are periodically flooded in spring. The Kamoja, Svyla and Juodupis River stretches over the major part of the site. The surface of the valley to the east of the Kamoja River is poorly drained and with several temporal oxbow pools.

The site is a particularly valuable example of a natural or moderately changed hydrological network with seasonally flooded land for a period up to 40 days per year. It is also important for groundwater recharge in the region, particularly in raised bogs of the site.

The Dysna and Birveta Rivers are regularly used for the filling of the ponds of the Birveta fishponds complex.

Social and cultural values

The aquaculture pond area is important for aquaculture production – mainly carp production. The local aquaculture enterprise is among the leading companies in the region.

Adutiskis-Guntauninkai forests area is very important for the commercial timber production. Svencioneliai State Forest Enterprise, which manages the forest area, produces up to 40% of the total production there.

Current land (including water) use

Aquaculture ponds are used for aquaculture only (mainly carp production). Forested areas are used for the commercial forestry, while agricultural land and meadows – for the agricultural activities. Farmers use agricultural land for the hay-making, grazing as well as for ecological agriculture. Clay ponds are used for recreation, while Dysna River is as protection zone of the State Border. Local people use forest area for picking of the berries and mushrooms.

Current scientific research and facilities

The biodiversity of Adutiskis-Svyla-Birveta wetland complex was investigated during the international project “Important transboundary Belarusian-Lithuanian and Lithuanian- Russian wetlands” implemented in 2001-2002 and funded by the International Association “Migratory Birds of Western Palearctic” and from

the Ramsar Convention Small Grants Fund (Svazas *et al.* 2003). Additional surveys of rare species of flora and fauna were implemented in certain areas not covered by that project (in the Svyła River valley, in wet meadows of the Dysna River, in Guntauninkai wet forest, etc.) in 2010. A detailed cartographic data with all records of rare species plotted on maps was also performed in 2010. This project was funded by the International Association “Migratory Birds of Western Palearctic” and the French Ministry of Ecology. Detailed surveys of breeding habitats of the threatened Great Snipe *Gallinago media* in this wetlands complex was implemented in 2010. It was funded by the Government of Norway. Detailed investigation of waterbirds in Birveta fishponds complex was implemented in 2009-2010 and sponsored from the national funds.

Current recreation and tourism

The site is popular neither for tourism, nor for other recreational activities, partly due to restricted public access valid in the State border zone. Only certain clay ponds are used for recreation by local people.