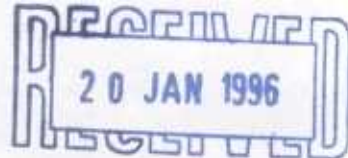


INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR WETLANDS

KARAVASTA LAGOON



1. COUNTRY
Albania
2. DATE
May 01, 1995
3. CONTACT
Arian Gace, Biologist
Ministry of Health and Environmental Protection,
Committee of Environmental Protection,
Tirana, Albania
4. NAME
Karavasta lagoon ecosystem
5. DATE OF RAMSAR DESIGNATION
August 22, 1994
Decision of Council of Ministers Nr. 413
29/11/95
6. COORDINATES
41 degrees 00 minutes North, 19 degrees 30 minutes East
Located along the Adriatic coast, between Shkumbin and Seman river mouths
7. LOCATION
Between Lushnja and Fier district; nearest town - Lushnja
8. AREA
20,000 hectares
9. WETLAND TYPE
Type 10 - Marine Coastal Wetlands
10. OVERVIEW
Karavasta lagoon ecosystem consists in the lagoon area and in the pine forest in the West. The lagoon is an enclosed brackish water system connected by three artificially maintained channels. Area in the South has been subject to dyking and drainage for agricultural purposes.
11. PHYSICAL FEATURES
The area is situated between two major river mouths Shkumbin to the north and Seman to the south, but has no direct connections with these rivers. Freshwater is therefore derived from the surrounding agricultural land and from the hills to the landward of the lagoon.
The area consists in:

- Karavasta lagoon that covers an area of 5880 ha
- National Park with a surface area of 1200 ha
- Area of Kular in the North of 815 ha that has the status of IUCN 4th category

In the south there are approximately 200 ha of drained land for agricultural purposes of very low productivity due to mainly high concentration of salt in the soil.

12. ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

It is a unique area in Europe with largely virgin flora and fauna and rich in species. The area support up to 5% of the total world breeding population of Dalmatian pelican (*Pelicanus crispus*) and harbors a significant proportion of the European breeding populations of little stern (*Sterna albifrons*) and collared pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*). The National Park is particularly interesting due to a characteristic Mediterranean native forest of umbrella pine (*Pinus pinea*) which is unique in the whole Albanian coast. Parts of the afforested area have been transformed into a seminatural structure due to introduction of alien species such as *Pinus halepensis* that was introduced from Italy early in this century. In the area are present other tree species such as (*Quercus robur*, *Acer Campestre*, etc.). The unique Albanian breeding place of the Dalmatian pelican with 700-1000 animals is located in the lagoon.

13. LAND TENURE

The area is state property and is been managed jointly through their local branches by General Directorate of Forestry and General Directorate of Fisheries which are both part of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The 200 hectares of drained wetland in the south are state owned. The surrounding lands are made up of small private tenures used for agriculture.

14. CONSERVATION MEASURES PROPOSED

The area for the moment is managed by a staff of 7 rangers which lacks the necessary training and equipment in wetland management. Future activities aim toward a improved planning and management of environmental resources of the Karavasta lagoon to both protect the ecosystem biodiversity (particularly, but not exclusively, the pelicans) and derive economical benefits for local communities.

15. CONSERVATION MEASURES TAKEN

The area has been nominated a Ramsar site and is subject to a PHARE project aiming the protection and management of the lagoon ecosystem.

16. CURRENT LAND USE

The current use on the site is mainly recreational; beach resorts, hunting. The lagoon itself is used by a private cooperative of local fishermen. The surrounding land is used for agricultural activities; orchards in the landward hills, cereal crops in the plain and some grazing in the south.

17. DISTURBANCE / THREATS

The area is under threat in general terms from hunting, pollution, agricultural practice and siltation. In addition to these factors the pelicans are specifically under pressure from disturbance by visitors and fishermen, and from damage to eggs, nests and young from currently unidentified agents.

Possible sources of industrial pollution are those from:

Seman river:

- The fertilizer production plant near Fier,
- Oil fields of Ballsh and Kucova and the petroleum refining industries of these two areas;
- Paper production plant near Lushnja.

Shkumbini river:

- Metallurgical plant of Elbasan;
- The petroleum refining industry of Cerrik.

For the moment many of these plants are shut down or are operational at a fraction of normal capacities.

The beach area is used by locals and from day trippers from the town of Lushnja. Solid waste is observed along the beaches and vehicles are frequently driven along the beach. The tree cutting has had recently an impetus due to a increased construction activities together with overgrazing and cutting of fuelwood by local people. The area has always been in a chronic shortage of energy resources for domestic use and the local population traditionally have used woodfire for cooking and heating.

18. NOTEWORTHY FAUNA

The area supports a significant population of the following species:

Dalmatian pelican	<i>Pelicanus crispus</i>
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
Great crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Great white Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Spoonbill	<i>Plateola leucordia</i>
Shelduck	<i>Anser anser</i>
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>

The area supports populations of fish species as follows:

Eels	<i>Anguila anguila</i>
*	<i>Sparus auratus</i>
*	<i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i>
*	<i>Aphanius fasciatus</i>
*	<i>Gobius buccichii</i>

19. NOTEWORTHY FLORA

The following species have been identified:

Umbrella Pine

Halepo Pine

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*
*
*
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*

Pinus pinea

Pinus halepensis Miller

Myrtus communis

Myrtillus macrocarpa

Fraxinus angustifolia

Quercus robur

Acer Campestre,

Aster albanicus sp. *paparisti*¹

Orchis albanica Goelz et. Reinhard¹

20. CURRENT RESEARCH/FACILITIES

None

21. RECREATION /TOURISM

Part of the former leisure facilities have been destroyed by vandalism during the transition period. At the moment is operational a small hotel of approximately 40-50 beds as well as a handful of small scale restaurants. The beach area is used by locals and from day trippers from the town of Lushnja.

22. MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Lushnje forestry board

23. JURISDICTION

Lushnje municipality

29. REFERENCES

Hagmeijer, J.M (1993). Wintering waterbirds in the coastal wetlands of Albania

Lamani, F. (1989)

Peja, N. et.al (1993)

30. REASONS FOR RAMSAR INCLUSION

Criteria #3

Karavasta ecosystem supports over 5% of total world population of Dalmatian Pelican

31. MAP OF SITE

Attached

¹ Endemic