

Designation date: 31/05/12 Ramsar Site no. 2051

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) – 2009-2012 version

Available for download from http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm.

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 14, 3rd edition). A 4th edition of the Handbook is in preparation and will be available in 2009.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

For office use only.

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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

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2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

May 2012

3. Country:

Faroe Islands, Denmark

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The precise name of the designated site in one of the three official languages (English, French or Spanish) of the Convention. Alternative names, including in local language(s), should be given in parentheses after the precise name.

Mykines

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for (tick one box only):

- a) Designation of a new Ramsar site; **X** or
- b) Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area

The Ramsar site boundary and site area are unchanged:

or

If the site boundary has changed:

- i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ; or
- ii) the boundary has been extended ; or
- iii) the boundary has been restricted**

and/or

If the site area has changed:

- i) the area has been measured more accurately ; or
- ii) the area has been extended ; or
- iii) the area has been reduced**

** **Important note:** If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

- i) a hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): **X**;
- ii) an electronic format (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) **X**;
- iii) a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables **X**.

b) Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park, etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The Ramsar Site covers the island of Mykines including the islet of Mykineshólmur, rocks and skerries, and it extends from these shores 500 m out into the sea.

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

62° 06'17"N, 7° 35'55"W

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s) the site lies and the location of the nearest large town.

Mykines is the westernmost island in the Faroe archipelago, situated west of the larger island of Vágar. It is part of the the Sørvágur municipality (fo: Sørvágs Kommuna). It has a population of 11 people in a small village in the southern part of the island. Only one mountain is on the island, Knúkur, 560 m. The islet of Mykineshólmur is connected to the island of Mykines by a walkway.

10. Elevation: (in metres: average and/or maximum & minimum)

The altitudes on the island are between 0-560 m. Further marine areas are included to 500 m from the shores, which marine water reaching 50 m depth.

11. Area: (in hectares)

2,300 ha (Ramsar site), 1,030 ha (Mykines and Mykineshólmur), the remaining area is marine water.

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

The Ramsar site at Mykines comprises grassy and skree slopes, sea cliffs and stacks and the surrounding sea. These provide breeding habitats for 15 species and estimated 250,000 pairs of seabirds. The site hosts the only colony of Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*, and the only known colony of Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* in the Faroes. It is estimated to hold internationally important populations of European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, including the largest Faroese colony of Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. Additionally there are populations of Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*, Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*, Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Tick the box under each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11). All Criteria which apply should be ticked.

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9
X X X X X

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

3a iv 3a v, 5c, 5d, 6b, 6d, 6e,

Criteria 2: The seabird community at Mykines (species listed under Ann. II or III of the Berne Convention) is at risk from climate related ecological changes, which may have disrupted the food web of marine birds in North Atlantic waters. Thus comprehensive and complex changes seem to happen in the surrounding marine ecosystem. (Fredriksen 2010)

For bird species information see justification of criterion 5 and point 12. The European Storm Petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*) is also listed under Ann. I of the EU Birds Directive and numerous Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus* (Ann. II and V, EU Habitats Directive) can be seen on the skerries and rocky shores.

Criteria 3: The Mykines populations of an estimated 125,000 pairs of Atlantic Puffin (Olsen in Grimmet and Jones 1989, Birdlife International 2011) is the largest in the Faroese Islands and comprise a significant proportion of the population of that species adapted to the special environment of the North Atlantic that are particularly characteristic for the temperate North Atlantic Biogeographic Region. Mykines also contain the only known population of an estimated 2,300 pairs of Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* and the only known colony of Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* in the Faroese Islands (Olsen unpublished).

Criteria 4: Mykines provides critical habitat for large populations of especially Atlantic Puffin, Fulmar, Kittiwake, Storm Petrel, Gannet and the other seabirds during the critical breeding cycle where large concentrations are gathered in very small areas on the sea, sea cliffs and grassy or stony slopes.

Criteria 5: Mykines contains approximately 250,000 pairs of seabirds comprising most notably the Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) with estimated 125,000 pairs, Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) estimated at 50,000 pairs, European Storm Petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*) estimated at 50,000 pairs, Black legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) estimated at 23,000 pairs and Common Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) estimated at 9,500 pairs (Olsen in Grimmett and Jones 1989, Gaard et al. 2006, Mitchell et al. 2004, Olsen unpublished).

Criteria 6: The estimated population of 50,000 pairs of European Storm Petrel in Mykines meets the 1% criteria. About 11 % of the known breeding population of that species is concentrated in the Faroe Islands (BirdLife International 2011). The population of estimated 23,000 (an increase from 20,662 pairs in the 1998 census) pairs of Black-legged Kittiwake meets the 1% criteria of the Eastern North Atlantic & North Seas population according to the Waterbird Population Estimates (Wetlands International 2004). Also the population of an estimated 125,000 pairs of Atlantic Puffin is expected to meet the 1% criteria.

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Western Palaearctic

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

A classification of the biogeographical provinces of the world (Udvardy 1975)

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & geology: thin mineral soil on basalt bedrock.

Geomorphology and landscape: lowlands and vertical bird cliffs.

pH : no information.

Salinity: Ocean, 34‰

Soil: mainly mineral.

Water permanence: Permanent, but smaller waterbodies may be intermittent.

Summary of main climatic features :

Annual average temperature: 7.1°C

Average July temperature: 11°C

Average January temperature: 3 °C

Days of air frost: 41

Rainfall: 1284 mm/year

Hrs. of sunshine: 840 hrs/year

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, and climate (including climate type).

The surface area of the island comprises basalt bedrock with thin layer of mineral soil covered with grasses and sedges. The vertical cliffs are barren, with little or no soil and sparse vegetation. The climate is mild and oceanic with high average winter temperatures and low average summer temperatures.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Not applicable

19. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar “Classification System for Wetland Type” present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

D, A, M, N, Tp

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

The Ramsar site at Mykines comprises important sea cliffs and grassy or stony slopes with seabird colonies. It contains the largest colony of Atlantic Puffin on the Faroes. It also contains the only colony of Northern Gannet, and the only known colony of Leach's Storm-petrel in the Faroes. Moreover, Common Guillemot, Black Guillemot, Black-legged Kittiwake and Northern Fulmar breed on the Island. The sea surrounding the land is used as feeding and resting area by seabirds. Some species are temporarily vulnerable to disturbance on sea after leaving the nest sites, i.e. at an extraordinary critical stage in their life cycles. During the non-breeding season most of the birds disperse from the breeding colonies. Breeding success is variable but has shown a downwards trend in general for the Faroes (Olsen 2011).

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

The Mountain Hare *Lepus timidus* has been introduced to the island, and inhabit the grassy slopes and small valleys. The Mykines House Mouse *Mus musculus mykinessensis* has been thought an endemic subspecies, but this is now being questioned. Numerous Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus* can be seen on the skerries and rocky shores, and large whales are seen from land every now and then. The skerries around the rocky marine shores provide habitat for colonies of European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, while the eroded tuff layers in the cliffs make perfect shelves for Guillemots and Razorbills *Alca torda*. On the grassy slopes above the bird cliffs, the thousands of Atlantic Puffins have their dens, and their strong faeces is a powerful fertilizer on the slopes.

23. Social and cultural values:

a) Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values:

The infields surrounding the village of Mykines are used for hay making, potato fields and animal pastures. The infields have traditionally been used for Barley production, and the patterns laid down by this can still be seen in the infields. The outfields are used for animal pastures, mainly sheep.

Traditional seabird hunting.

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning?

If Yes, tick the box **X** and describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland: **X**

Seabirds have probably been hunted since the settlement of the island and historically large numbers of seabirds were caught and eggs collected, however, in most cases quantitative data is lacking.

On Mykines the collection of young Gannets is a tradition of cultural significance. One night in late summer the breeding ledges are accessed. 40 people are involved in this fowling where 300-500 birds are taken (Olsen 2011)

- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

- a) within the Ramsar site: Private and public. (no real difference is in land use of private and public owned land)
- b) in the surrounding area: The sea around the site is public.

25. Current land (including water) use:

- a) within the Ramsar site: Agriculture, sheep pastures, bird hunting, tourism and fishing.
- b) in the surroundings/catchment: Fishing and tourism.

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

a: The potential risk to the colonies from the predation by rats should be emphasised. At present Mykines is free of rats, however, there are rats on many of the larger islands in the Faroese archipelago and the introduction of rats to Mykines could have a detrimental effect. Disturbance

from tourists both by foot, within the Atlantic Puffin colony, and by motorboat, around the island, may have a negative effect, however, data is lacking.

b) The seabird community in Mykines is at risk from climate related ecological changes, which may have disrupted the food web of marine birds in North Atlantic waters. A decreasing number of seabirds such as Common Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) and Black-legged Kittiwake have shown up in he colonies. Population figures suggest a substantial decrease in Guillemot on Mykines from 14,500 attending birds in 1972 (Dyck and Meltofte 1972), 9,500 in 1987 (Olsen in Grimmet and Jones 1989) to 7,089 in 1997/99 (Olsen unpublished). For Black-legged Kittiwake figures also suggest a decrease from 25,470 pairs in 1987 to 20,662 pairs in 1998. (Olsen in Grimmet and Jones 1989 and Olsen unpublished). Similarly, Atlantic Puffins have had low breeding success for many years. Thus comprehensive and complex changes seem to happen in the marine ecosystem underlining the need to manage other factors, which may affect the populations such as commercial fisheries, oil spill, seabird harvest and pollutants.

27. Conservation measures taken:

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

In particular, if the site is partly or wholly a World Heritage Site and/or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, please give the names of the site under these designations.

The Ramsar Site includes the Important Bird Area (IBA) Mykines and Mykineshólmur.

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

Ia ; Ib ; II ; III ; IV ; V ; VI

c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?:

No

d) Describe any other current management practices:

Hunting is regulated according to the Hunting Act from 1954 and later revisions (Dam 1974).

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

None.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Common Guillemot, Black-legged Kittiwake and Northern Gannets have been counted at 10 years interval since the 1970'ies. Annual hunting statistics have been collected for Northern Gannet and Atlantic Puffins.

2011 was the first year of a monitoring programme for the Atlantic Puffin colony at Mykines.

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

Guided tourist tours, leaflets. See also <http://heima.olivant.fo/~mykines/> for more tourist information about Mykines.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

A fairly large number of tourists visit Mykines. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Faroes. Guided tours are both on land and sea, as well as unguided tourists visiting the island and undertaking trekking tours. It is possible to stay overnight at a small rest house, and several houses are available for renting. Travel to the island is by ferry and helicopter.

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Includes land owners, municipality (Sørvágs Kommuna). Also legislation on bird hunting and legislation on nature protection, which are the jurisdiction of various state agencies.

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

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34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

BirdLife International. 2004. Detailed species account from Birds in Europe: population estimates, trends and conservation status.

BirdLife International. 2011. Important Bird Areas factsheet: Mykines and Mykineshólmur. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 13/04/2011

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Wetlands International. 2004. Waterbird Population Estimates. 4th Edition.

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