

# 1. Lac Oubeïra

**Geographical Coordinates** 36°50'N 8°23'E

**Area** 2,200ha

**Location** About 50km east of the city of Annaba and 15km west of the border with Tunisia, in the Wilaya (province) of Et-Tarf, north-easternmost Algeria. A few kilometres west of Lac Oubeïra Ramsar site (see site account number 2).

**Date of Ramsar Designation** 4 November 1983.

**Other International Designations** None.

**National Designations** Within National Park (Parc national d'El Kala; established by decree 83-462 under the Law on the Protection of the Environment, law number 83-05).

**Principal Features** The site forms part of the extensive El Kala wetland complex, and includes a shallow (only a few metres deep), eutrophic, freshwater lake fed by runoff from the wooded hills which surround the wetland on three sides. The northern, seaward side of the site is formed by a major sand dune system. Oubeïra is linked with the Mediterranean Sea by the Oued El Kebir, and supports extensive beds of *Potamogeton pectinatus* and *Trapa natans* (rare in Algeria). At times of exceptionally high flow in the Oued El Kebir, backflow into the lake may occur. The area is of particular importance for wintering water birds, especially *Anas penelope*, *A. strepera*, *Aythya ferina*, *A. fuligula* and the globally threatened species *Oxyura leucocephala*. Oubeïra supports an abundant fish fauna and may play a major role in the recharge of regional groundwater. (1a,1c,2a,3b)

**Conservation Issues** The 1987 Algerian National Report noted that five to six million carp fry had been introduced to the site in 1985 and 1986. The 1990 National Report referred to the following problems at Lac Oubeïra: introduction of carp fry; degradation of fringing vegetation; water extraction for irrigation and domestic consumption; development of neighbouring land for agriculture and grazing; urban expansion. In the light of this information and consultations with the Algerian authorities, the Ramsar Monitoring Procedure was implemented at Lac Oubeïra in November 1990. The Monitoring Procedure Mission which visited the site found that, for the first time in living memory, the lake had dried out completely in the summer of 1990, owing to a combination of drought and water extraction. Although desiccation of the lake was a serious matter, it had at least served to kill the introduced carp which were having an adverse impact on submerged vegetation. The detailed report produced as a result of the Monitoring Procedure, also included consideration of the impact of the Mexenna Dam being built on the Oued El Kebir to supply the city of El Kala with drinking water. It was felt that the dam could have a serious impact on other wetlands in the El Kala region, but that Lac Oubeïra would be relatively unaffected. The report concludes that ongoing extraction to serve the needs of agriculture was the most serious long-term threat to the site's ecological character, and recommends that extraction of surface and groundwater be strictly controlled; conservation and management of the site should be incorporated into a Regional Plan for wise use and conservation of land and water resources.