

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

*Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.*

Note 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. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

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FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY

Designation date Site Reference Number

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

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## 2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

January 2004

## 3. Country:

Finland

## 4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Kirkon–Vilkkiläntura Bay

## 5. Map of site included:

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

### a) hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List):

Yes.

### b) digital (electronic) format (optional):

Yes.

**6. Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude):

60°31' N / 27°42' E

**7. General location:**

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

The unbroken area is situated in southeastern corner of the province of Southern Finland, on the coast of the Gulf of Finland, in the municipality of Virolahti, 1 km northeast of Virolahti village. The municipality (371 sq.km of land) has ca. 3 900 residents.

**8. Elevation:** (average and/or max. & min.)

6–0 m

**9. Area:** (in hectares)

194 ha

**10. Overview:**

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

The bay is an important area for waterfowl, especially for Whooper Swans and Bewick's Swans, and waders in migration periods. The breeding wetland bird fauna is valuable.

**11. Ramsar Criteria:**

Circle or underline 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).

1, 2 & 4

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	3	<u>4</u>	5	6	7	8
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**12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. 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).

1) A representative example of a near-natural wetland type (shallow sea bay) in the EU Boreal region.

2) 7 species of the EU Birds Directive Annex I breed in the area: Slavonian Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*), Corncrake (*Crex crex*), Crane (*Grus grus*) and Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*). Other birds species included in this Annex stage in the area (see justification criterion 4) The site supports also 3 nationally threatened bird

species (see section 20). Invertebrates of the EU Habitats Directive Annex II include dragonfly species *Leucorrhinia pectoralis*.

4) The breeding waterfowl includes ca. 130 pairs of 14 species. Despite of small size the bay is an exceptionally important staging area for waterfowl. In spring, the highest daily counts of species listed in the EU Birds Directive Annex I reach up to 400–500 Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*), tens of Bewick's Swans (*C. columbianus*), 50 Smews (*Mergus albellus*), and 1 000–2 000 other ducks. For Bewick's Swan the site is the most important in Finland. Also waders are abundant in spring and up to 300 of both Ruffs (*Philomachus pugnax*) and Wood Sandpipers (*Tringa glareola*) are observed.

**13. 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:**

Southern boreal forest vegetation zone.

**b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme** (include reference citation):

Etelä-Suomen ja Pohjanmaan metsien suojelun tarve-työryhmä. Puheenjohtaja: Ruuhijärvi, R., Sihteerit: Kuusinen, M., Raunio, A. and Eisto, K. 2000. Metsien suojelun tarve Etelä-Suomessa ja Pohjanmaalla. Etelä-Suomen ja Pohjanmaan metsien suojelun tarve-työryhmän mietintö. Suomen ympäristö 437. 284 s. Ympäristöministeriö.

Working group on the need for forest protection in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia. Chairman Ruuhijärvi, R., Secretaries Kuusinen, M., Raunio, A. and Eisto, K. 2000. Forest protection in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia. The Finnish Environment 437. Ministry of the Environment.

**14. 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.

**Geology:** Geochemically included in Rapakivi granites area. Bedrock is composed of rapakivi granite.

**Origins:** Natural.

**Soil type:** Mainly silt and clay.

**Water quality:** General quality passable. Eutrophic. Salinity ca. 1–4 ‰.

**Depth of water:** Ca. 0.5–1.5 m. Water-level usually low in spring and high in autumn and winter.

**Climate:** Duration of growing season ca. 165 days, mean annual temperature ca. +4 °C, mean annual rainfall ca. 650 mm. Waters ice-covered normally from December to mid April. Southern boreal forest vegetation zone.

**15. Physical features of the catchment area:**

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

General geology and geomorphological features as well as soil types and climate are of same type than in the site. General land use includes mainly private forestry and agriculture.

**16. Hydrological values:**

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

None significant.

**17. 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:** Coastal: A & H

<u>A</u>	B	C	D	E	F	G	<u>H</u>	I	J	K	Zk(a)
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**Inland:**

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Zk(c)
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**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.

A – Permanent shallow sea bays

H – Brackish alluvial meadows

**18. General ecological features:**

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Kirkon–Vilkkiläntura is a shallow and sheltered sea bay, connected to the sea through two narrow sounds. The area includes ca. 115 ha of water. The eastern part, Vilkkiläntura, is characterized by an extensive reed zone. Growths of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) dominate the vegetation, together with Common Club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) and Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*) in certain areas. Submerged vegetation is diverse with Spiny Naiad (*Najas marina*), Spiked Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and Marestalk (*Hippuris vulgaris*) abundant. Alluvial meadows are narrow and shores are fringed with a zone of Black Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Vilkkiläntura is surrounded by forest and by agricultural land in the north.

The western part, Kirkontura, has risen above the average sea level and is characterized by extensive sedge (*Carex* spp.) meadows with only a small open-water area. Sedge species *C. nigra juncella* and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) are dominating the vegetation, but Common Reed is spreading rapidly in the area. Alluvial meadows are fringed with zones of Tea-leaved Willow (*Salix phylicifolia*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Black Alder. Kirkontura is surrounded mainly by agricultural land.

### **19. Noteworthy flora:**

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. 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.***

None significant.

### **20. Noteworthy fauna:**

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. 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.***

Threatened birds (VU in Finnish Red List) include Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) and Great Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*).

### **21. Social and 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.

Significant values include birdwatching and outdoor recreation.

### **22. Land tenure/ownership:**

(a) within the Ramsar site:

Private-owned.

(b) in the surrounding area:

Private-owned

**23. Current land (including water) use:**

(a) within the Ramsar site:

Intense hunting of waterfowl in autumn

(b) in the surroundings/catchment:

Agriculture and forestry are carried out in the surroundings. A fish farm is located nearby.

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

The eutrophication and overgrowing of Kirkon–Vilkkiläntura is accelerated by agriculture, nearby fish farming and earlier wastewaters. Drainage of Kirkontura has been accelerated by earlier ditching. Hunting of waterfowl in autumn affects negatively on the site. American Mink (*Mustela vison*) and Raccoon Dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) may cause damage to the breeding of birds.

The problems are still actual.

**25. Conservation measures taken:**

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

The site is included in the Natura 2000 Network, designated as SPA, and in the Waterfowl Habitats Conservation Programme. Grazing has been carried out in a small area at Vilkkiläntura since the 1990s.

**26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

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

Conservation of the Natura 2000 site will be carried out under the Nature Conservation Act. Plans include mowing, dredging and increasing of grazing to stop overgrowing of the wetland.

**27. Current scientific research and facilities:**

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

The breeding bird fauna was surveyed in the early 1980s and in 1996. Observation of migratory birds has been regular since the early 1970s. The vegetation was surveyed in 1997.

**28. Current conservation education:**

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

None significant.

**29. Current recreation and tourism:**

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

The area is a very popular birdwatching site especially in spring. Two birdwatching towers have been constructed.

**30. Jurisdiction:**

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

**a)** Southeast Finland Regional Environment Centre, **b)** Ministry of the Environment.

**31. 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.

Southeast Finland Regional Environment Centre, PO Box 1023, FIN-45101 Kouvola, Finland.

**32. Bibliographical references:**

scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Jokinen, S. & Lehesvirta, T. 1997. Kirkon–Vilkkilänturan kasvillisuus 1997. Manuscript. Kaakkois-Suomen ympäristökeskus.

Leivo, M. 2000. Suomen kansainvälisesti tärkeät lintualueet. Linnut-vuosikirja 1999. (English summary: Important Bird Areas in Finland).

Leivo, M., Asanti, T., Koskimies, P., Lammi, E., Lampolahti, J., Mikkola-Roos, M. & Virolainen, E. 2002. Suomen tärkeät lintualueet FINIBA. BirdLife Suomen julkaisu 4, Suomen graafiset palvelut, Kuopio.

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