

Designation date: 04/07/2011 Ramsar Site no. 2023

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

Available for download from [http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key\\_ris\\_index.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm).

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

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

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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

Designated: 7 April 2011

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### 3. Country:

**UK (England)**

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### 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.

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

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### 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 ; or

b) Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

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### 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:**

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**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): ;
- ii) an **electronic format** (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) ;
- iii) a **GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables** .

**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 boundary follows the same boundary as Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and encompasses most of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI (**Site of Special Scientific Interest**). For further details please see the maps provided at designation.

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**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.

Longitude: 00° 34' 56" W

Latitude: 52° 20' 04" N

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**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.

Nearest town / city: Wellingborough (population: 72,519 (2001)) and Northampton (population: 212,100 (2010))

The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits are located in the East Midlands region which is situated towards the centre of England in the county of Northamptonshire. The site extends for approximately 35 kilometres along the alluvial deposits of the River Nene floodplain on the southern outskirts of Northampton, downstream to Thorpe Waterville, north of Thrapston.

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

Min: 24m      Max: 59m      Mean: 37.77m

**11. Area:** (in hectares) 1,358

**12. General overview of the site:**

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

This chain of both active and disused sand and gravel pits form an extensive series of shallow and deep open waters which occur in association with a wide range of marginal features, such as sparsely-vegetated islands, gravel bars and shorelines and habitats including reedswamp, marsh, wet ditches, rush pasture, rough grassland and scattered scrub.

This range of habitats and the varied topography of the lagoons provide valuable resting and feeding conditions for concentrations of wintering waterbirds, especially ducks and waders. Species such as golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* also spend time feeding and roosting on surrounding agricultural land outside the Ramsar site.

**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  
                       

**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).

The site qualifies under **Criterion 5** because it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds:

In the non-breeding season, the site regularly supports 23,821 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04).

The site qualifies under **Criterion 6** because it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in the populations of the following species or subspecies of waterbird in any season:

Species	Count and season	Period	% of subspecies/population
Mute swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	629 individuals - wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	1.7% Britain
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	773 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0% <i>strepera</i> , NW Europe (breeding)

**Bird counts from:** Denton Wood Associates. 2005. *Wintering waterbirds in the Upper Nene Valley – supplementary data analysis in relation to possible SSSI, SPA and Ramsar site designation*. Unpublished report to English Nature. Copies available from Natural England on request.

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**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:**

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

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**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	Alluvium, basic, neutral
Geomorphology & landscape	Floodplain, excavations
Nutrient Status	Eutrophic
pH	Circumneutral
Salinity	Fresh
Soil	Mainly organic
Water permanence	Permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Bedford 1971 – 2000) <a href="http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/bedford.html">http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/bedford.html</a>  Max. daily temperature: 13.5 °C Min daily temperature: 5.6 °C Days of air frost: 50.5 Rainfall: 584.4mm Hrs of sunshine: 1523.6

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**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 River Nene Catchment is 631 square miles (1,630km<sup>2</sup>).

The key characteristics of the wider Nene Valley - broad, flat and predominantly wide floodplain surrounded by rising landform of adjacent landscape types; deep, alluvial clay and silt with sand and gravel, masking the underlying geology; river channel with slow flowing watercourse with limited bank side vegetation in areas.

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**18. Hydrological values:**

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

Flood water storage

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**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.

Code	Name	% Area
7 (Human-made)	Excavations	49%
4 (Human-made)	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	26%
Other	Other	18%
6 (Human-made)	Water storage areas	5%
Ts (Inland)	Seasonal / intermittent freshwater marshes / pools on inorganic soils	1%
Xf (Inland)	Freshwater, tree dominated wetlands	1%

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#### 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.

Open water, with associated wetland habitats including reedbeds, fen grassland and woodland which support a number of wetland plant and animal species including internationally important numbers of wintering and breeding wildfowl.

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#### 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.*

##### Invasive plants present on site:

- Floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*
- New Zealand Pigmy Weed *Crassula helmsii*
- Nuttall's Pondweed *Elodea nuttallii*

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#### 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.*

#### Birds

##### Species occurring at levels of European importance (as identified at designation):

Over winter the area regularly supports:

Annex 1 species	Count and season	Period	% of GB population
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	2 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0%
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	5,790 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.3%

**Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:  
Over winter the area regularly supports:**

Species	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI (individual birds)	Period	% of GB population
Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	5,001	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	1.2%
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	178		1.2%
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	625		1.1%
Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1,187		1.3%
Great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	288		1.8%
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	285		1.2%
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	2,323		1.3%

### 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:

- Aesthetic
- Conservation education
- Environmental education/ interpretation
- Livestock grazing
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Scientific research
- Sport fishing
- Tourism
- Transportation/navigation

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?

- No

If Yes, tick the box  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:
- 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:

b) in the surrounding area:

Ownership category	a) On-site	b) Off-site
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	+	+
Local authority, municipality etc.	+	+
Private	+	+
Other	+	+

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

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

Activity	a) On-Site	b) Off-Site
Nature conservation	+	+
Tourism	+	+
Recreation	+	+
Current scientific research	+	+
Fishing: recreational / sport	+	+
Grazing	+	+
Flood control	+	
Transport route		+
Domestic water supply		+
Urban development		+
Non-urbanised settlements		+
Agriculture	+	+

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

a) within the Ramsar site:

b) in the surrounding area:

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of problem	a) On Site	b) Off Site	Major impact
Unspecified development: urban use	1	Activities connected with ongoing urban development cause significant disturbance to wintering birds if unmanaged.		+	
Vegetation succession	2	Lack of grazing is leading to succession from short grassland to rank grassland, scrub / woodland. Whilst this is desirable in certain areas, widespread vegetation succession will result in a decrease in the availability of suitable habitat for key species.	+		+
Introduction / invasion of non-native plant species	2	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i> , Nuttall's Pondweed <i>Elodea nuttallii</i> and <i>Crassula helmsii</i> present in small areas of the site	+		
Recreation / tourism disturbance	2	Access by people and dogs both on and off of public rights of way is a significant cause of disturbance in some areas. The site is also subject to a variety of recreational activities including fishing & watersports.  Demand for access and formal / informal recreational activities within the Nene Valley are increasing; development of facilities / opportunities is often in an uncoordinated manner.	+	+	+

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Vegetation succession: This is principally being addressed through agri-environment schemes, predominantly HLS. This is only relevant where large areas of grassland are involved. The scope of agri-environment schemes mean that much of the land is not eligible and there are no alternative sources of funding for the small scale landowners / occupiers to undertake positive management works associated with marginal / aquatic habitats e.g. willow clearance around edge of a lake. Alternative sources for funding e.g. local grant schemes should be investigated. Issues leading to vegetation succession are also to be addressed through enhanced liaison with landowners/occupiers, management agreements and management plans; assisted by powers under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Introduction / invasion of non-native plant species: Invasion of lakeside edges by invasive non-native plants is to be addressed through enhanced liaison with landowners / occupiers and The Environment Agency.

Recreation / tourism disturbance: The intensity and location of recreational activities taking place just prior to SSSI notification on 24 November 2005 was considered compatible with maintaining appropriate population levels. This is managed through voluntary agreements assisted by powers within Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended and The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010.

The development of future recreational opportunities is to be addressed through valley-wide tourism and recreational strategies to provide a coordinated approach; including the development of access



management plans for key sites and that appropriate planning policies are incorporated within strategic planning documents to ensure developments take account of direct and indirect recreational disturbance. Natural England intend to support and work in partnership with the following initiatives: The Wildlife Trust's Nene Valley Vision, RSPB Futurescapes and River Nene Regional Park projects.

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? Yes

## 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.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site*
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	+	+
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	+

\*There are 3 small areas outside the boundaries of the Ramsar Site which are SSSI - two within the Upper Nene Valley gravel pits SSSI and one which is a separate SSSI called Wollaston Meadows.

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:

The management of Ramsar sites in the UK is determined by either a formal management plan or through other management planning processes, and is overseen by the relevant statutory conservation agency. Details of the precise management practices are given in these documents. Measures to mitigate current threats are mentioned under point 26.

## 28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

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

No information available.

## 29. Current scientific research and facilities:

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

- Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Counts
- Ongoing SSSI unit monitoring
- Various local Wildlife Trust monitoring and research projects

## 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.

The Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire and Rockingham Forest Trust make use of the site for environmental educational purposes, both formal and informal. The Wildlife Trust have also established

an Ecology Group within the Nene Valley aimed at increasing the number of local people with wildlife monitoring skills and involvement with local reserves.

Within the wider Ramsar site, bird hides exist at Summer Leys Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Titchmarsh LNR, both managed by the Wildlife Trust and at Stanwick Lakes, managed by Rockingham Forest Trust. There is a visitor centre at Stanwick Lakes (<http://www.stanwicklakes.org.uk/northampton/things-to-do/visitor-centre/>), managed by Rockingham Forest Trust which has interpretation facilities and an events programme relating to Stanwick Lakes; there is no wider Nene Valley focussed visitor centre.

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### 31. Current recreation and tourism:

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

Recreational activities: bird-watching, walking, fishing, sailing, canoeing, water-skiing, cycling

Facilities provided: visitor centre, interpretation, bird hides, cafe

These activities / facilities are spread across the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

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### 32. Jurisdiction:

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

Head, Natura 2000 and Ramsar Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/07, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EB

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### 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.

Site Designations Manager, Natural England, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Touthill Close, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1UA, UK

Phone 0845 600 3078;

Email: [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

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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.

**Brayshaw, S. 2004.** *Biodiversity and conservation assessment of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits in relation to possible SPA, Ramsar site and SSSI designation.* RSPB, unpublished report.

**Cayford, J.T. & Waters, R.J. 1996.** Population estimates for waders Charadrii wintering in Great Britain, 1987/88 – 1991/92. *Biological Conservation* **77**: 7-17.

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**Hoyo, J. del, Elliot A. & Sargatal, J. eds. 1996.** *Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 3: Hoatzin to Auks.* Barcelona, Lynx Edicions.

- Kershaw, M. & Cranswick, P.A. 2003.** Numbers of Wintering Waterbirds in Great Britain and the Isle of Man, 1994/1995 – 1998/1999): I. Wildfowl and selected waterbirds. *Biological Conservation* **111**: 91 – 104.
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- Pollitt, M., Cranswick, P., Musgrove, A., Hall, C., Hearn, R., Robinson, J. & Holloway, S. 2000.** *The Wetland Bird Survey 1998-99: Wildfowl and Wader Counts.* Slimbridge: BTO, WWT, RSPB & JNCC.
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- Stone, B.H., Sears, J., Cranswick, P.A., Gregory, R.D., Gibbons, D.W., Rehfisch, M.M., Aebischer, N.J. & Reid, J.B. 1997.** Population estimates of birds in Britain and in the United Kingdom. *British Birds* **90**: 1-22.
- Stroud, D.A., Chambers, D., Cook, S., Buxton, N., Fraser, B., Clement, P., Lewis, P., McLean, I., Baker, H. & Whitehead, S. 2001.** *The UK SPA network: its scope and content.* Volumes 1-3. JNCC, Peterborough.
- Taylor, B. & van Perlo, B. 1998.** *Rails: A Guide to the Rails, Crakes, Gallinules and Coots of the World.* East Sussex, Pica Press.
- Wetlands International. 2002.** *Waterbird Population Estimates – Third Edition.* Wetlands International Global Series No. 12. Wageningen, The Netherlands.

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