

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Completed: 07.06.1992, updated 23.11.1998.

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DD	MM	YY

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country: Hungary

3. Name of wetland: Hortobágy-Halastó

4. Geographical coordinates: 47° 37' N, 21° 06' E

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.)

Between 88 and 91 m above Baltic Sea level.

6. Area: (in hectares) 2093 ha

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

An artificial "hand-built" fishpond system in relatively natural status, the largest one in the region. Very significant breeding, feeding and migrating site. Wintering place for White-tailed Eagles.

8. Wetland Type (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex I of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

marine-coastal: A . B . C . D . E . F . G . H . I . J . K

inland: L . M . N . O . P . Q . R . Sp . Ss . Tp . Ts
. U . Va . Vt . W . Xf . Xp . Y . Zg . Zk

man-made: 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . 5 . 6 . 7 . 8 . 9

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant: 1. Fishpond system.

9. Ramsar Criteria: (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12, next page.)

1a . 1b . 1c . 1d | 2a . 2b . 2c . 2d | 3a . 3b . 3c | 4a . 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site: 1d, 2a, 3a

10. Map of site included? Please tick *yes* -or- *no*

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

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

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Please provide additional information on each of the following categories by attaching extra pages (please limit extra pages to no more than 10):

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page. (Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document).

1d: the system is near-natural, with valuable flora and fauna characteristic for ancient alkaline marshes of the region.

2a: breeding: 30 pairs of Ferrugineous Duck, 50 pairs of Pygmy Cormorant, 300 pairs of Great White Egret, mixed heron colony with 7 species, 200 pairs of Spoonbill, 180-300 pairs of Whiskered Tern, migrating: Lesser White-fronted Goose (50-450), Crane 30 000-65 000, 40-70 White-tailed Eagles are overwintering, Slender-billed Curlew recorded 11 times in the last 25 years, etc. see at point 18.

3a: see point 18.

13. General location: (include the nearest large town and its administrative region)

Country of Hajdú-Bihar, West from Hortobágy village.

14. Physical features: (e.g. geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

The system was built in 1914-18 by war prisoners by hand on a very poor quality land which earlier was marshy area. The pond system consists of 11 units and the smaller wintering ponds. The fishpond gets the water supply from River Tisza through the Western Main Channel by gravitation. This channel has very good water quality. The same river (Tisza) flooded twice a year the area before the regulation of rivers in Hungary. The ponds are drained to Árkus Channel, at the south it runs into River Hortobágy. Water from one unit is not used to fill another one after, so the quality of the drained water is relatively good. Soil: alkaline solonch. Climate: semi-arid, semi-humid forest steppe, with average annual precipitation of 550 mm, the mean annual temperature is about 10 °C. The annual evaporation loss is about 200 mm.

15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

These fishponds can be regarded as water storage basins also. So in this respect they can have some significance in flood control.

16. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

Openwater surfaces covered with vast stands of Floating-heart (*Nymphoides peltata*), White Water Lily (*Nymphaea alba*), along the dikes there are dense reedbeds. In some ponds there are a few smaller islands covered by reeds and bulrush. Mainly during autumn some ponds are dried up. These mudflats are very good feeding areas for waders.

17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc)

White Water Lily (*Nymphaea alba*); Floating-heart (*Nymphoides peltata*) covers 40-50 ha on unit VI.; Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*), Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*), *Salvinia natans*, *Wolffia arrhiza*. In the edge of the feeding canal *Chrysanthemum serotinum*, *Armoracia macrocarpa* (protected species). The Carpathic endemic, protected *Plantago schwarzenbergiana* grows on the dikes.

18. Noteworthy fauna: (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.)

A protected fish species also inhabits the ponds: *Misgurnus fossilis*.

302 bird species were recorded here, which is remarkably high compared to the 375 birds species registered in Hungary.

Most important nesting species: Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps griseigena*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), mixed heron colony with all the Hungarian breeding species: Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) – Nighth Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) - Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) – Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*). 250-300 pairs of Great White Egret (*Egretta alba*), 120-200 pairs of Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*), 3-15 pairs of Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), in increasing number Pygmy Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*) (50 pairs in 1998), 100 pairs of Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), 20-30 pairs of Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), population of breeding Little Crane (*Porzana parva*) is increasing, 180-200 pairs of Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*), Bearded Tit (*Panurus biarmicus*), Penduline Tit (*Remiz pendulinus*), Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*), population of Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) expands.

Migrating species: some ten thousands of White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) overnights during autumn migration, 50-180 (maximum of 450 individuals were recorded) a Lesser White-fronted Geese (*Anser erythropus*), Red-necked Goose (*Branta ruficollis*)(maximum of 49 individuals were recorded), flocks of ten thousands of ducks, mainly Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and Teals (*Anas crecca*), but all species recorded in Hungary occurs. Thousands of Gulls including many rare species in Hungary, also rare Terns. Common Crane (*Grus grus*) migrates and overnights in huge masses (30-40 000), the maximum number was 65 000. 150-500 individuals of Cranes are also overwintering. Huge masses of waders are feeding on the drained ponds, for example in 1981 and 1998 30-40 000 Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) appeared in spring. Also many rare waders. Regularly appears (11 times during the last 25 years) the Slender-billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*).

Each year 40-70 White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) are overwintering, which is the highest number in Hungary. They are fed during winter by the wardens of the national park.

Protected mammal is the Otter (*Lutra lutra*).

19. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)

Main benefit from the area is the fishproduction (done on an extensive way). The reed harvesting is a significant activity too.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

- (a) site since 1997 the main part is owned by the Hungarian State (2015.6 ha, used by Hortobágy Fish Farm)
 - (b) surrounding area Hortobágy National Park Directorate
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21. Current land use:

- (a) site extensive fish farming, reed harvesting
 - (b) surroundings/catchment grazing, hayproduction, reed harvesting
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22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

- (a) at the site inadequate intensive fishfarming in the past, but since 1997 the whole system is used with respect to nature conservation purposes
 - (b) around the site not known
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23. Conservation measures taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented)

The site is part of Hortobágy National Park. In 1991 the most valuable two ponds was designated protected, since 1997 the whole system is protected. Registered as Ramsar site. There is a management and development plan for the national park prepared in 1998.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

Some management measures are proposed: Wastewater of a goose farm pollutes the eastern, south-eastern edge of the ponds, this has to be stopped. Some smaller wetland reconstructions on the unused small ponds are also planned.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)

The natural status survey of the area is going on.

26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)

There is a bird-hide system (ten hides), which is continuously completed with new ones, the old ones are repaired. This activities are implemented together with a local NGO. Also some signboards were prepared but not installed at the site yet. Development of ecotourism facilities is planned. The area protected, permission for entering is needed from the national park directorate. One of the most popular birdwatching site of the Hortobágy, where birds can be observed without disturbing them.

27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)

There is no this kind of use.

28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)

The Directorate is the first instant authority of Ministry for Environment.

29. Management authority: (name and address of local body directly responsible for managing the wetland)

Hortobágy National Park Directorate.
4024 Debrecen, Sümegh út 2.

30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only)

At HNP directorate a lot.

Please return to: **Ramsar Convention Bureau, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 GLAND, Switzerland**

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