

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:

31-01-1997

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

DD	MM	YY
23	06	75

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Islamic Republic of Iran

3. Name of wetland: Amirkelayeh Lake

4. Geographical coordinates: 37°17'N 50°12'E

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.) 20 m below sea level

6. Area: (in hectares)

1,230 ha

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

Amirkelayeh Lake lies on the coastal plain of the Caspian Sea. It is a rather deep, permanent, freshwater lake with rich growth of floating and submergent vegetation, extensive reed-beds and some willow thickets. The lake used to be important for duck hunting and is important for irrigation of surrounding rice fields. The water is very clear. The lake drains into a channel of the Sefid Rud river in the Northwest. It is an important breeding area for herons and egrets, and a wintering area for diving ducks, coots and swans.

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: O Tp W 3

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: 1a

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:

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).

1a: Amirkelayeh Lake is a good representative example of a natural wetland characteristic of the South Caspian lowlands.

2a: The lake provides important wintering habitat for *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, a globally-threatened bird.

3a: Amirkelayeh Lake regularly holds over 20,000 waterfowl in winter

3c: The lake regularly holds over 1% of the regional Middle East populations of *Netta rufina*, *Aythya ferina* and *Fulica atra*.

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

Amirkelayeh Lake is situated on the coastal plain of the Caspian Sea in the Province of Gilan. The lake is located about 12 km north of the city of Langarud and about 60 km east of Rasht.

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)

Amirkelayeh Lake is a permanent, freshwater lake with an average depth of 3-4 m and a maximum depth of 6 m. The bottom of the lake is muddy. The lake is about 4.5 km long by up to 1.7 km wide. At high water levels it drains to the north-west through a small stream into a channel of the Sefid Rud some 1.5 km away. The lake is sufficiently high above the level of the Caspian Sea to be unaffected by the recent rise in sea level.

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

The water of the lake is extremely clear. It is used for irrigation of rice fields in the area around the lake during the dry summer months. The lake is fed by springs, local run-off and rainfall. Flooding occurs in autumn and winter, but the fluctuations in the water level are only slight.

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

Amirkelayeh Lake is a eutrophic freshwater lake. The open water areas support abundant submerged and floating vegetation. The surrounding emergent marshes are dominated by *Phragmites* reedbeds. The surrounding area comprises rice paddies with patches of woodland, and there are remnants of former coastal forest. It is a good breeding place for herons, ducks and coots.

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

The open-water areas of the lake support abundant submerged and floating vegetation including species of *Nelebitum*, *Lemna*, *Potamogeton*, *Hydrilla*, *Miriophyllum* and *Ceratophyllum*. The vegetation around the lake is dominated by the reed *Phragmites communis*, with some reedmace *Typha* and willows *Salix*.

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

As a breeding place for waterfowl, this wetland is noted for its heron (Ardeidae), duck (Anatidae) and rail (Rallidae) populations. The first two are greatly augmented by migrants and in winter huge numbers of coot *Fulica atra* tend to be present, together with very significant numbers of red-crested pochard *Netta rufina*, common pochard *Aythya ferina* and smaller numbers of swans *Cygnus* spp. and Ardeidae. Passage migrants in spring and autumn include egrets *Egretta alba* and *Ardea purpurea*, crake *Porzana parva* and snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. Marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus* is a common winter visitor, and the falcon *Falco peregrinus* is an occasional winter visitor.

At least 101 species of birds have been recorded in the wildlife refuge. A more detailed list with some waterfowl counting results is attached.

Mammals known to occur in the refuge include golden jackal *Canis aureus*, jungle cat *Felis chaus* and wild boar *Sus scrofa*.

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

Formerly the site was an important duck hunting area, but since 1994 hunting is prohibited.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site: National Government

(b) surrounding area: public ownership

21. Current land use:

(a) site: Formerly duck hunting for export and local consumption. The lake provides a source of water for irrigation of the rice fields during dry summer months.

(b) surroundings/catchment: There are several small villages in the area, and an all-weather road passes close to the eastern side of the lake. Rice cultivation is common.

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: There are no major threats to the habitat, and there have been no changes in the ecological character of the site since its establishment as a wildlife refuge in 1971. Prior to its designation as wildlife refuge the lake had been an important area for waterfowl hunting by local villagers. During the revolution in the late 1970s, the villagers took back control of the lake and restarted hunting. In 1994 the Department of the Environment re-established control and now hunting is prohibited again.

(b) around the site: no information available

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 was designated a protected region in 1970, and upgraded to a wildlife refuge of the current size (1,230 ha) in 1971. This wildlife refuge was designated a Ramsar site on 23 June 1975. Now that control by the Department of the Environment has been re-established (see also 22) hunting is prohibited again at the site.

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

none known

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

Annual mid-winter waterfowl censuses have been carried out by the Ornithology Unit, Department of the Environment, since 1968. Many ornithological surveys have been undertaken since then in many parts of the year. The last comprehensive censuses were in November of 1972, 1973 and 1974. A duck-ringing programme was initiated by the Ornithology Unit in 1968. The Department has also carried out some investigations on duck-hunting techniques and harvesting levels at the lake.

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

no information available

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

no information available

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

Department of the Environment

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

Department of the Environment, address as mentioned above (28)

30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only)

Carp, E. (1980). *A Directory of Western Palearctic Wetlands*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

Evans, M.I. (1994). *Important Bird Areas in the Middle East*. BirdLife International, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Firouz, E. (1971). *The Wetlands and Waterfowl of Iran*. Teheran, Game and Fish Department of Iran.

Mansoori, J. (1983). *National Report on Iran's Wetlands of International Importance as Habitat for Waterfowl*. Prepared for the Groningen Conference, Netherlands, in May 1984.

Scott, D.A. (1995). *A Directory of Wetlands in the Middle East*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and IWRB, Slimbridge, United Kingdom.

Scott, D.A. and Smart, M. (1992). *Wetlands of the Seistan Basin, South Caspian and Fars, Islamic Republic of Iran*. Ramsar Convention Monitoring Procedure Report no 26. Ramsar Convention Bureau, Gland, Switzerland.

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**List of bird species including counting results
Amirkelayeh Lake**

waterfowl:

- globally threatened

<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>	100 w
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- over 1% of regional population

<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	16 w
<i>Anas strepera</i>	1,300 w
<i>Netta rufina</i>	2,500 w
<i>Aythya ferina</i>	4,200 w
<i>Fulica atra</i>	45,000 w

- other

<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	
<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	5 w
<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	100 w
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	200 w
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	25
<i>Anas crecca</i>	4,560
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	1,220
<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	910
<i>Larus minutus</i>	200
<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	several

other birds:

<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	several
<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	20 w

all counts single birds

w = wintering

source: Evans, 1994