

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:

07-02-1997

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Islamic Republic of Iran

3. Name of wetland: Lake Alagol, Lake Ulmagol and Lake Ajigol

4. Geographical coordinates: 37°21'N 54°35'E

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

6. Area: (in hectares) 1,400 ha

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

A group of three small lakes with associated marshes on the rolling grassy steppes to the east of the Caspian Sea near the border with Turkmenistan. They are important for breeding, passage and wintering waterfowl. Lake Alagol lies about 6 km south-west of Lake Ulmagol and Lake Ajigol. Lake Alagol is slightly saline, the other lakes contain freshwater. The lakes support a wide variety of breeding waterfowl in wet years.

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: Ss Ts R P W

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: 2a, 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: Lakes Alagol, Ulmagol and Ajigol are good representative examples of natural brackish and freshwater lakes characteristic of the vast plains to the east of the Caspian Sea.

2a: The lakes provide wintering habitat for four threatened species of birds, *Pelecanus crispus*, *Anser erythropus*, *Aquila heliaca* and *Oxyura leucocephala*.

3a: The three lakes regularly support over 20,000 waterfowl in winter.

3c: The lake supports over 1% of the regional Middle East breeding population of *Anas strepera*, *Aythya fuligula* and *Fulica atra*.

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

Lakes Alagol, Ulmagol and Ajigol are situated in the Province of Mazanderan, on the Turkoman steppes near the border with Turkmenistan. The town of Gorgan is about 60 km to the north-east. There are several small settlements near the lake complex.

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 site comprises three small lakes, with associated marshes and intervening grassy steppe on the Turkoman Steppes. Lake Alagol (37°21'N 54°35'E, 900 ha) is slightly saline and fed by seepage, springs and local run-off, flooding in winter and sometimes drying out completely in summer. The average water depth is 2 m. When full, it overflows westwards. The lake bottom consists of mud and sand. The other two lakes (37°24'N 54°39'E, 640 ha) are freshwater lakes, fed by local rainfall, mainly in autumn and winter. Both are subject to wide fluctuations in water level, and occasionally dry out completely. Their bottoms consist of mud and fine clay. The lakes rarely, if ever, freeze over in winter. The surrounding steppes are vast, gently undulating grassland with low sandy hills.

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

there are no special hydrological values known

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

Lake Alagol is oligotrophic. It supports little aquatic vegetation except for some *Juncus*, *Carex* and grasses, mainly in the north-east, and a few patches of reedbeds. Lake Ulmagol and Lake Ajigol are eutrophic freshwater lakes. They also support reedbeds, and some aquatic vegetation like *Lemna* and algae.

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

Lake Alagol supports some rushes and sedges *Juncus* and *Carex*, grasses and a few patches of reeds *Phragmites communis*. Ulmagol and Ajigol support a more varied vegetation of *Juncus*, duckweed *Lemna*, *Phragmites*, manna *Alhagi* and algae, and an abundant submerged vegetation. Much of Ajigol is overgrown with *Phragmites*, and the lake has some adjacent stands of *Tamarix* thickets, grasses and saltbush.

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

count data, etc.)

The lakes are utilized by a wide variety of waterfowl during the migration season and in winter, and are especially important for greater flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, greylag goose *Anser anser*, dabbling ducks, pochard *Netta rufina*, smew *Mergellus albellus* and coot *Fulica atra*. Breeding species include great crested grebe *Podiceps cristata*, black-winged stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, gull *Larus genei* and *Remiz pendulinus*. Black stork *Ciconia nigra* has been recorded in summer and may breed. A list with some waterfowl counts is attached.

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

The lakes are used for recreational hunting and fishing.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site: National Government

(b) surrounding area: no information available

21. Current land use:

(a) site: fishing, grazing, reed-cutting and wildfowl hunting. The water of lake Alagol is being used for irrigation by local farmers, and for a fish hatchery.

(b) surroundings/catchment: the surrounding area are steppes with a few small settlements and some agriculture.

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: Ulmagol and Ajigol are subject to high levels of disturbance from wildfowl hunters. The same is applicable to Lake Alagol, but on much smaller scale since lake Alagol is less easy accessible. The extraction of water from Lake Alagol for irrigation purposes and a fish hatchery has resulted in lower water levels in the lake, especially in summer.

(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 is not legally protected. Lake Alagol is on the Montreux Record.

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.)

The Ornithology Unit of the Department of the Environment has carried out annual mid-winter censuses since 1969, and breeding-surveys have been undertaken on several occasions. Two MSc students from Teheran University have conducted research on the avifauna and physico-chemical characteristics of the three lakes.

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

PO Box 5181
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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.
- IUCN (1977). *World Directory of National Parks and Other Protected Areas*. IUCN, Morges, Switzerland.
- 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. (1976). *A List of the Wetlands of Iran*. Internal Report. Department of the Environment, Teheran, Iran.
- Scott, D.A. (1995). *A Directory of Wetlands in the Middle East*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and IWRB, Slimbridge, United Kingdom.

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**List of bird species including counting results
Lakes Alagol, Ulmagol and Ajigol**

waterfowl:

- globally threatened species

<i>Anser erythropus</i>	150
<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	19
<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	few

- 1% or more of population

<i>Anas clypeata</i>	1,600 w
<i>Anas strepera</i>	2,480 w
<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	4,000 w
<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	278 w
<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	200 br
<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	10
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	
<i>Fulica atra</i>	50,000
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	120 br
<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	1,000 w
<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	2,500 w

- other

<i>Anser anser</i>	750
<i>Egretta alba</i>	
<i>Gavia arctica</i>	few
<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	10 br
<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	
<i>Larus genei</i>	600 br
<i>Mergus albellus</i>	250
<i>Netta rufina</i>	1,700
<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	1,125
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	20-30 br
<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	2 br

other birds:

<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	
<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	5
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	2
<i>Asio otus</i>	3
<i>Circus cynaeus</i>	6
<i>Falco columbarius</i>	3
<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	br
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	9
<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	w
<i>Passer hispanoliensis</i>	br
<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	br

all counts individual birds

br = breed, w = winter, pass = passing on migration

sources: Evans, 1994 and Scott, 1995