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

Available for download from http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm.

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

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

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DD MM YY

Designation date | Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

April 2011

3. Country:

Norway

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.

Sørkapp

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 ❑

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 boundaries include the existing Sørkapp Nature Reseve, with the supplement of Stormbukta and Sørkapplandet (Øyrlandet from Stormbukta, Olsokneset, Sørflya, Kikkutodden, Keilhaufjellet to Dumskolten). All within Sør-Spitsbergen National Park

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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.

76º34' N, 16º40' E (Sørkapplandet)

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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.
Sørkappøya is an island in an archipelago located off the southern coast of Spitsbergen. Sørkapplandet includes the south coast of the southern part of Spitsbergen 'mainland', up to Stormbukta. The proposed

site is situated approximately 190 km south of Longyearbyen, which is the administration centre of Svalbard. Longyearbyen has approx. 2100 inhabitants (2009).

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

0 – 500 m.a.s.l

11. Area: (in hectares)

12663 ha (land)
27047 ha (marine)
Total area: 39710 ha

12. General overview of the site:
Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

Generally the area is characterized by; short growth season of less than 50 days between spring and autumn frost; water saturated soil; frozen subsoil; and low precipitation. The rich production in the sea is the basis for most of the bird- and mammal life, but also for plants and invertebrates, both directly and indirectly. The proposed site covers shallow sea areas, islands, numerous ponds and lakes, streams and small rivers. The low-lying coastal landscape with permafrost has spotted (grass) vegetation, and further inland it meets the ice covered mountain ridges. On the ridge the bird cliff Keilhauet is situated and adjacent guano rich ground. 19 species of marine mammals can be seen in the area. Offshore ice carries Polar Bear Ursus maritimus around the Cape – but they are not specifically common in the land area. Svalbard Reindeer Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus and Arctic Fox *Vulpes lagopus* is found here the whole year round.

Svalbard Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta hyperborea* is the only bird species wintering on land. A few bird species like Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* and gulls and auks may be wintering here in areas free of sea ice, but most bird species are migratory. The number of breeding and migrating bird species is high for the biogeographic region, and are represented in high numbers. Waders, goose species and seabirds are dominant groups. Some are listed on the Norwegian (and Svalbard) Redlist (see 14).

During the winter nearly all plants and animals remain dormant under the snow cover, or have migrated southwards or to sea areas free of ice.

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).

(Capitalized letters shows the species`status on the Norwegian/Svalbard Red List)

Criterion 1:
The island Sørkappøya is part of a marine archipelago with shallow waters, numerous skerries and small islands. Sørkapplandet is a wetland strongly influenced by permafrost and erosion from wind, ice and the sea. The proposed site is a typical archipelago and wetland for the biogeographic region.

Criterion 2:
Though the whole area is not very well documented, bird species are regularly registered on the Norwegian/Svalbard Red List. Some of them are breeding in the area: Red Knot *Calidris canutus* (EN) 105 ind., Sanderling *Calidris alba* (VU) 500 ind., Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* (NT) 400 ind., Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (NT) 6 ind., Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (NT) 50 ind., Brant *Branta bernicla* (NT) 50 ind., Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (LC), Yellow-billed Loon *Gavia adamsii* (NT), Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (EN) 40000 ind., Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* (NT), and Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* (EN). Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (VU) 200 ind. occasionally use the area (http://www.loff.biz/Documents/Reports/LoFF_Sorkapp_host06.pdf. Pers. comm.. Georg Bangjord).

Polar Bear *Ursus maritimus* (VU) is frequently observed.

Criterion 3:
The site supports biological elements that are rare or characteristic for the biogeopgraphic region.The status as a nesting place varies dependent on the disturbance from the Arctic fox and Polar Bear. The smaller islets are yet important and traditional breeding sites for Barnacle geese Branta leucopsis, Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea,* Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*. Sabine's Gull is probably nesting on the islets. Sørkappøya is an important breeding site for Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellata*, and Øyrlandet is known to be a breeding site for Red Phalarope and different waders. During autumn migration the area (and maybe Sørkappøya in particular) is of great importance for different waders and geese. Especially Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritime*, occurs in high numbers (2000 ind). The site has a high diversity of both nationally common seabirds, and threatened/rare species. Species adapted to bird cliffs like Black-legged Kittiwake and Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* are breeding in high numbers in Keilhauet. Other auk species are found here, but not in great numbers (Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia* (VU), Dovekie *Alle alle*. The sea area between Stormbukta and Øyrlandet is an important moulting area for Common Eider *Somateria molissima*, King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* 2000 ind., Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis.* (Georg Bangjord, pers. comm.).

Post-breeding concentrations of Barnacle geese are found along the western coasts of Spitsbergen to Sørkapp. Large aggregations of Brent geese have been recorded at Sørkapp. It is also reported (Bangjord et al 2006) that northern parts of Øyrlandet and Sørflya seems to be important staging area for Brent geese. Important post-breeding aggregations of Pink-footed geese have been located in coastal regions in southern parts of Spitsbergen (Mehlum F. 1998).

Criterion 4
The site is the first (and last) landmark on Spitsbergen on the migratory pathway to and from the continent. It is of special value for geese and waders during the autumn migration. For breeding species see justification of Criterion 2.

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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:

North arctic tundra zone, Mid-arctic tundra zone [1].
North and East Barents Sea Ecoregion (Arcitic)[2].

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

[1].Elvebakk 1989. *Biogeographical zones of Svalbard and Jan Mayen based on the distribution patterns of thermophilous vascular plants*. Upubl. manuskript, Universitetet i Tromsø.
[2].Marine Ecoregions of the World (MeoW). The Nature Conservancy

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.

Geology	The basement in the oldest formations includes Precambrian, Cambrian and Ordovician rocks. It occurs as a belt along the west-coast of Spitsbergen, Here are also Carboniferous-Cretaceous platform cover strata, and areas with tertiary folding and sedimentation.
Geomorphology	Flat islands. A coastal landscape with beach terraces facing the sea borders. Landwards the beach terraces meet alpine mountains with large glaciers. Periglacial phenomena are common; solifluction occurs.
Substrate / soil type	The strand flat is a low-land plain along the coast, partly covered by marine deposits and presumably formed due to the combined actions of frost weathering and abrasion by the sea during interglacial periods. It is Mesic to seasonally wet with thin snow cover in winter. Closed to discontinuous vegetation. Level silty areas, old stable and vegetated alluvial fans and sedimentation plains. Often graminid dominated. Wind-eroded tussocks imply a thin snow cover. Moss cover reduced due to the less dense snow cover and frost upheaval. The surrounding sea areas are shallow and nutrient rich. The shoreline around the islands consists partly of cliffs, partly of sandy shores. The land areas consist of bare rock and some areas covered with marine deposits.
Water depth / fluctuations	During spring and early summer the soil is nearly saturated with water as permafrost impedes drainage, preventing the water from percolating downwards. The lakes are small and shallow. The rivers are short-lived summer phenomena. At the coasts the thickness of permafrost is 10-40 m. The variation between high and low tides measured at Ny-Ålesund is 137 cm at average.
Climate	Spitsbergen has an Arctic climate, mildened by the northern arm of the Gulf Stream running along its Western coast. The average temperature (Hornsund) of Februar (the coldest month) is -12.7°C, and the average temperature of July (the warmest month) is +4.0°C. In the winter time (from September to April) the temperature rarely drops below -30°C, whereas in the summer time (from June to August) it rarely exceeds +10°C. Frequent changes in temperature, humidity, air-pressure and wind strength are characteristic of Spitsbergen. Perpetual day lasts from April 21th to August 21th, and the polar night from October 28th to February 20th. Annual precipitation (Hornsund) is 405 mm.

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

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

Continuous permafrost and periglacial and permafrost-related terrain features are widespread in areas not covered by glaciers. At the coasts the thickness of permafrost is 10-40 m. Various forms of patterned ground, such as stone circles and stripes are widespread and well developed. Fluvial activity is important, especially during the spring melt. River systems transport large amounts of sediments from glaciers. When the riverbeds dry during autumn, erosion from fine-grained sediments transported by the wind leads to deposition of eolian sediments (loess) downwind from the rivers.

The climate of Svalbard is arctic, with mean annual air temperature of about –5.4°C at sea level (Hornsund) and as low as –15°C in the high mountains. Precipitation measured at sea level is low, only about 400 mm w.e. Usually April-May is dry and the period August-October tend to be humid. Snow is the dominant type of precipitation. The border-zone between cold arctic air from the Polar Basin and mild maritime air from the oceans to the south occurs around Svalbard. Meteorologically, this border zone at times is very active with cyclones generating unstable, often stormy weather. There may be very windy periods during winter, and fogs are common during the summertime in the coastal areas. April-May is often calm and sunny.

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

Natural erosion processes occur due to ice cap, and a very harsh climate with waves and sea ice. Fresh water on the islands originates from precipitation. (See also 17). The permafrost areas and mires represent important carbon reservoirs.

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.

A, Vt, D, N, E, J

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.

Situated in the Arctic and characterized by:

- archipelago and tundra wetland. Rock or sand/gravel dominated shores. Low-land plain along the coast, partly covered by marine deposits and presumably formed due to the combined actions of frost weathering and abrasion by the ice. Seasonal streams and ponds.
- sparse grass vegetation. Vegetation on the islands is influenced by saltwater.
- drift ice occur in winter and spring, but the archipelago is normally not icebound.
- Important staging area for marine adapted bird species, geese and waders. Used as breeding, moulting, feeding and resting area.
- Used whole year round for mammals like Polar Bear, Svalbard Reindeer and Arctic Fox. Strandbogen is a former haul-out site for walrus.

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*.

Botanical records are insufficient, but the following species on the Norwegian (Svalbard) Red list are registered: Glacier Crowfoot *Beckwithia glacialis* (LC), Polar Whitlow-grass *Draba micropetala* (NT) Arctic Buttercup *Ranunculus hyperboreus ssp. arnellii* (DD).

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:
High numbers of Red-throated Loon is breeding within the site (pers.comm. Georg Bangjord). The area is probably also a breeding area for Grey Phalarope and different waders, though not well documented. The area seems to be of particularly great importance for waders and geese during the autumn migration. The counts of Purple Sandpiper suggest that most of the Svalbard population uses the area during autumn migration.

Mammals:
Polar bear *Ursus maritimus* is common. Locally they may prey heavily upon eggs and nestlings. The Svalbard Reindeer *Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus* seems to be separated from other reindeer stocks on Svalbard. (pers.comm. Georg Bangjord).

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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:

Harvesting of eggs and eider down has been performed with various intensity in Svalbard from the 18th century and until today. Trappers using this part of Spitsbergen as hunting grounds have also collected eggs and eider down in the past.

There are several cultural heritage sites from Russian wintering in the 17th century and from Norwegian wintering in the 19th century. These are graves, huts, remain from crosses, huntingtraps and hutsites. Not all are registered by the Governor of Svalbard.

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?

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:

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24. Land tenure/ownership:
a) within the Ramsar site:

State owned

b) in the surrounding area:

State owned

25. Current land (including water) use:
a) within the Ramsar site:
Trappers living on the west coast of Spitsbergen have occasionally been given permission to collect eider down after nesting birds have left the islands.

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

Tourists from cruise ships go a shore sometimes. Ships passing.

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:

No such factors are known.

b) in the surrounding area:

Increasing tourism, oil spill from ships and oil/gas development projects in this part of the Arctic is a possible threat.

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.

The Ramsar site was established as a National Park and a Nature Reserve July 1th 1973. The boundaries for the Ramsar site lies within South Spitsbergen National Park and Sørkapp Nature reserve.

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 management plan exists (2011).

d) Describe any other current management practices:

The proposed site lies within South Spitsbergen National Park and Sørkapp Nature reserve (established in 1973) where hunting of all birds and mammals are permanently prohibited. The regulations for Sørkappøya Nature Reserve ban visits from May 15th to August 15th.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:
e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

None

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

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

Some research and biodiversity monitoring have been conducted in the area. On Sørkappøya there is a cabin used by biologists during field studies. It was built in 2009.

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.

No such activities have been conducted, mainly because of the remoteness of the area and difficult access.

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

There is limited use of the proposed Ramsar site for recreation/tourism. Three different landing sites are known used by the expedition cruise ships. The regulations for Sørkappøya Nature Reserve ban visits from May 15th to August 15th because of the birds breeding season.

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

Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management (DN), Tungasletta 2, 7485 Trondheim
Ph +47 73580500
Fax +47 73580501
Email: postmottak@dirnat.no

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.

The site is managed by the Governor of Svalbard, which is under the instruction of DN on matters concerning nature conservation issues. Address: Governor of Svalbard, PO Box. 633, N-9171 Longyearbyen. Phone: +47 79 02 43 00
Email: postmottak@sysselmannen.no

34. Bibliographical references:
Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Christiaane Hubner 2009. *Use of pre-breeding areas and spring migration patterns of Svalbard geese*. Report to the Governor of Svalbard

Brattbakk, I. 1986. *Flora and vegetation.* In Oritsland, N. A. (ed.), *Svalbardreinen og dens livsgrunnlag*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 15–34.

Elvebakk, A. 1989: *Biogeographical zones of Svalbard and Jan Mayen based on the distribution patterns of thermophilous vascular plants*. Upubl. manuskript, Universitetet i Tromsø.

Braaten, P. Eide, R. Scheie, JO. Strøm, H. og Georg Bangjord. 2000. *Sjøfuglregistreringer Spitsbergen vest Mars 2000*. Intern rapport. Sysselmannen på Svalbard og Norsk Polarinstitutt.

http://vannstand.statkart.no/stat.php?lokalitet=13&visNiv=++Vis++&stasj=0

Mehlum F. 1998. *Areas in Svalbard important for geese during the pre-breeding, breeding and post-breeding periods*. Norsk Polarinstutt Skrifter 200: 41–55.

Bangjord, G, Frantzen, B.O., Hammer, S. & Oddvar Hagen. 2006. *Registreringer av fugl sør på Sørkapplandet august-september 2006*. Arbeidsrapport 1- 2006. Longyearbyen feltbiologiske forening

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