

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:

Inge Hafstad,
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7700 Steinkjer
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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

May 2013

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.

Horta

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:

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 are the same as for the existing Horta Nature Reserve and Horta Bird Protection Area.

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.

65°12'N 11°28'E

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.

Horta is an archipelago in the Leka municipality, Nord-Trøndelag County.

The nearest town is Rørvik, approximately 35 km to the south-east, with app. 2600 inhabitants.

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

0 – 19 m.a.s.l.

11. Area: (in hectares)

Horta Nature Reserve: 755 ha of which 67 ha is land area.

Horta Bird Protection Area: 2403 ha of which 141 ha is land area.

Total: 3158 ha of which 208 ha is land area.

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland. Horta is a small archipelago approximately 11 km northwest of Leka Island. The area consists of small islands, skerries and islets, with shallow marine waters in the coastal zone. The two main islands in the archipelago are Burøya and Vågøya. The landscape is broken and dominated mostly by remnant infield areas, narrow mires/ bogs, coastal heathland, and islets with vegetation influenced by seabird droppings. The islands and shallow waters are important sites for birds, Eurasian Otter and seals.

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).

Criterion 1.

The site consists of a marine archipelago with shallow waters dotted with numerous skerries, islets and islands. This kind of archipelago is representative of the North-European coast in this part of the Atlantic region. Horta exhibits interesting examples of coastal heathland. Coastal heathland is endangered, and has become a rare habitat.

Criterion 2.

The western coastline of Norway is characterized by long fjords and numerous islands. This holds true also for the coastline of Trøndelag and Nordland. The coastal heathlands in Norway represents one third of the total European Atlantic heathland belt. Even at the northern brink of their distribution, the ocean currents cause a mild coastal climate, dominated by high precipitation. *Calluna vulgaris* is usually the dominant plant species in these heaths. Characteristically, moisture dependent, northern and alpine species tend to blend in with the typical heathland vegetation. These landscapes have been an important resource for the maintenance of livestock, both in terms of grazing and harvesting grounds. Traces of early settlements and cultural influences in the landscape dating back to the Stone Age are found in the area. The anthropogenic heathlands in the coastal regions of Central and Northern Norway are thus a part of a prehistoric cultural landscape formed 3-4000 years ago. Heathland with a genuine maritime influence is very limited and the northern coastal heaths found in Norway today typically occur on islands and islets, often in mosaic with bogs and ponds. Mainly due to changes in agriculture the habitat type is highly threatened. Horta exhibit excellent examples of this internationally valuable and endangered habitat.

The site is breeding area for vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered species. Horta is frequently used as a breeding-, molting- or staging area by several rare or threatened bird species (see also point 22). It is an important breeding area for Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle* (VU) and Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* (VU), and the site has stable populations of Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra* (VU), Common Seal *Phoca vitulina* (VU) Puffin *Fratercula arctica* (VU) and Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* (CR) are also frequently feeding/wintering in the area.

Criterion 4.

Horta is important for seabirds and waterfowl at different critical phases in their life cycle as it is used as resting area for migratory and moulting waterfowl and as breeding site for different common and rare/threatened bird species (see justification of criterion 2). Recent analysis of GPS tracers attached to European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, indicates that Horta is an important foraging area for birds from Sklinna (Ramsar site) during breeding season (S-H Lorentsen 2010, pers. comm., 21 Dec.). Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* and Greylag Goose *Anser anser* are breeding and moulting in the area in considerable numbers, and it is an important breeding area for Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* and European Shag. White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* is supposed to breed in the area. These are all characteristic species for this kind of archipelago in the biogeographic region.

(Capitalized letters shows the species`status on the Norwegian Red List 2010)

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:

Atlantic region².

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

² EU Habitat directive 92/43/EEC

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	Horta consist of granite formed during the Caledonian orogeny. Horta igneous complex is a part of the Bindal Batholith, a sequence of late Ordovician to Silurian plutons emplaced into the Helgeland Nappe Complex of the uppermost Allochthon of the Norwegian Caledonides. The bedrock is characteristic for Horta and is called hortitt.
Geomorphology	The archipelago is formed by the waves from the open ocean. The area varies between wetlands, remnant infield areas, bogs and moors with common heather, and islets with vegetation influenced by seabird droppings.
Water depth/ fluctuations	The archipelago is parts of a larger shallow area of approximately 15km ² were the water depth ranges from 0-50 meters.
Climate	The climate is typical Atlantic with high annual precipitation (>1500mm and average about 200 days with precipitation pr. year), wet summer and mild winters.

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 site consists mostly of shallow marine waters less than 30 metre deep at low tide. However, some deeper areas occur in the outer edges of the site and in the catchment area.

18. Hydrological values:

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

Due to the fact that most of the shoreline consists of hard granite rocks, erosion is minimal in spite of a very harsh winter climate.

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, D, U.

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.

The skerries and islands in the outermost coastal zone are partly devoid of vegetation due to the rough seas. Marine shallow waters with a large production of marine invertebrates and fish, combined with seaweed beds and kelp forests sustains a rich animal life. The coastal zone is characterized by rock, stone and gravel dominated shores. The vegetation is dominated by common species on coastal shores, bogs and heathland, with different sedges and heather species. This vegetation is formed through many years of grazing and harvesting. Several places the vegetation is influenced by the droppings from seabirds. At the two main islands there are buildings from the time Horta was inhabited. The buildings are now used as holiday homes. The large area of shallow waters with high biological production makes it very important as a breeding and staging area for a large number of seabird species, the dominant groups being cormorants, eiders, divers, gulls, terns and auks. The two Norwegian coastal seal species have breeding grounds in the area.

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.*

Middle boreal vegetation zone (Mb-O3 – strong oceanic section)¹.

¹Zonal division showing the variation in vegetation from south to north and from the lowlands to the mountains, and sectional graduation showing the variation between the coast and inland (In: Moen, A. 1998. *Nasjonalatlas for Norge*, vegetasjon. Statens kartverk, Hønefoss).

The vegetation is dominated by common species on coastal shores, mires/bogs and meadows, like different sedge and heather species. Seashore vegetation and aquatic vegetation appear scattered. Birds heavily fertilize some islands. On Burøya and Vågøya there are remnant infield areas. Moisturized moor and coastal heathland (see point 14) are common vegetation types. Ceased grazing is about to change much of the vegetation. Invasion of scrubs and woodlands is not very common at Horta, but some scrubs have established on some of the islands

Many common species are lacking at Horta, probably because the islands are small and isolated, and relatively young. Common moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* (NT) is found here.

Red Champion *Silene dioica* is one of the common species. In the gulls and cormorants colonies the droppings give nitrous substrate which benefit plants such as Common Scurvy Weed *Cochlearia officinalis* and Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*.

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.*

The site has rather stable populations of Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra* (VU), Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus* and the Common Seal *Phoca vitulina* (VU). More rarely the Killer Whale *Pseudorca crassidens* visit the archipelago.

In this region Horta is the most important breeding site for Northern Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* with approx. 150-200 pairs, which is about 20 percent of the Norwegian population. The Northern Lesser Black-backed Gull has regularly been monitored at this site. The population is generally declining and the subspecies is often considered to be endangered (though since it is a sub species it is not included in the Norwegian Red List).

Red-throated diver *Gavia stellata* are breeding regularly. Here are considerable breeding populations of Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser*. Among other gulls the Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* and Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* dominate, but the Mew Gull *Larus canus* (NT) is also a frequent breeder. White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* is frequently seen in the area, and is probably breeding within the site. White-billed diver *Gavia adamsii* (NT), Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* (NT) and Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* (NT) occurs in the site regularly.

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:

Horta was settled until 1965. Fishing was the main trade, but the land recourses were also heavily utilized for grazing, scything and cultivation (potatoes and vegetables).

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:

Private

b) in the surrounding area:

State owned

25. Current land (including water) use:

a) within the Ramsar site:

The site is used by scientists (biological and geological research) and as vacation homes for private landowners.

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

Fishing

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:

None known

b) in the surrounding area:

None known

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.

Horta was designated as Nature Reserve and Bird Protection Area December 19th, 2003.

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?:

Management plan exists.

d) Describe any other current management practices:

Because of the status as Nature Reserve and Bird Protection Area human activity is regulated by an official set of regulations. The aim is to conserve the botanical, zoological and geological elements, including elements of the semi-natural landscape.

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.

Horta has been an important site for seabird monitoring since the early 1980s, especially for monitoring the Northern Lesser Black-backed Gull population. A geological science program is also ongoing in the area.

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.

None

31. Current recreation and tourism:

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

On the two main islands there are some remaining buildings which are used as vacation homes, especially in the summer.

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 County Governor of Nord-Trøndelag, which is under the instruction of DN.

Address: County Governor of Nord-Trøndelag, Statens Hus, N-7734 Steinkjer. Phone. +47 74 16 80 00.

E-mail: postmottak@fmnt.no

34. Bibliographical references:

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

Artsdatabanken 2010. Artskart. <http://artskart.artsdatabanken.no/Default.aspx>

Barnes, C.G., Prestvik, T., Sundvoll, B. & Surratt, D. 2004. Pervasive assimilation of carbonate and silicate rocks in the Hortavær igneous complex, north-central Norway. *Litbos*.

Hafstad, I. 2005. Forvaltningsplan for Horta verneområde, Leka kommune, 2006-2010. Fylkesmannen i Nord-Trøndelag, Miljøvernavdelingen. *Rapport 2-2005*. 40s.

Kaspersen, T.E. 1997. Utkast til verneplan for sjøfuglområder i Nord-Trøndelag. - Fylkesmannen i Nord-Trøndelag, Miljøvernavdelingen. *Rapport 3-1997*. 1-221.

Lorentsen, S.-H. & Christensen-Dalsgaard, S. 2009. Det nasjonale overvåkingsprogrammet for sjøfugl. Resultater til og med hekkesesongen 2008. Norsk institutt for naturforskning (NINA), Rapport 439: 53 pp.

Moen, A. 1998. Nasjonalatlas for Norge; vegetasjon. Statens Kartverk, Hønefoss

Nilsen, L.S. & Moen, A. 2004. Botanical mapping and management plan for Hortavær in Leka. NTNU *Vitensk.mus. Rapp. Bot. Ser.* 2004-1: 1-22.