

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note 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. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

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

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FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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**2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:**

1<sup>st</sup> October, 2005

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**3. Country:**

Poland

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**4. Name of the Ramsar site:**

Narew River National Park

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**5. Map of site included:**

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

**a) hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* X -or- *no*

**b) digital (electronic) format** (optional): *yes* X -or- *no*

The green interrupt line shows the boundary of the Narew River National Park. The green interrupt line with dots shows the boundary of the buffer zone of this National Park. The pink interrupt line shows the boundary of the strict protected zone. The brown interrupt line shows the boundary of communities. The boundary of the Narew River National Park as the Ramsar site is shown on the map as the green interrupt line.

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**6. Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude):

22°46' – 22°58' E; 52°58' – 53°09' N

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**7. General location:**

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

The proposed site is a section of a multi-bed river valley of the Upper Narew River, and is located in north-eastern Poland, 20-30 km west of the town of Bialystok, in the Podlasie Voivodeship (Województwo Podlaskie).

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**8. Elevation:** (average and/or max. & min.)

110.7 - 118 m a.s.l.

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**9. Area:** (in hectares)

7 350

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**10. Overview:**

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

The wetland is a 35 km section of a natural swampy valley within the borders of the National Park. The valley is wide as of a typical lowland river with a very well developed system of bends, oxbows and highly sinuous riverbed breaking through moraine hills. The wetland's landscape and wildlife features provide for its outstanding value for biodiversity conservation. Owing to specific hydrological and geological conditions 90% of the site is swampy and inaccessible to people providing excellent refuge for rich flora and fauna, especially for local and migrating waterfowl.

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**11. Ramsar Criteria:**

Circle or underline 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).

√1 • √2 • √3 • √4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

Criteria 5 and 7 are not suitable in this case.

**12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:**

Criterion 1. Narew River National Park contains several rare and unique wetland types in the scale of biogeographical region which have been preserved in a near- natural state. Great diversity of local wetland habitats supports many vulnerable and protected species of plants and animals, thus the site should be considered internationally important. The wild winding river constitutes a unique example of wetland system in the continental scale, and not only in the biogeographical region.

There are no references to the Annex I of the EU Habitat Directive in this case.

Criterion 2. The site should be also considered internationally important because it supports vulnerable and endangered communities and species (fens, reedbeds, 33 aquatic communities of submersed and floating plants, rare and endangered species of vertebrates). The site shelters at least 13 rare and endangered plant species and 67 species of endangered and rare birds, including birds endangered in the global scale. Rare and endangered bird species include, among others: aquatic warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*), bearded tit (*Panurus biarmicus*), bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), black tern (*Chlidonias niger*), wigeon (*Anas penelope*), ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), pintail (*Anas acuta*), great snipe (*Gallinago media*), and spotted crake (*Porzana porzana*). The site also supports migrating waterfowl – ducks, plovers and ruffs (ruff flocks up to 4 000 individuals).

**DP** – Species from the EU Bird Directive

**PCKZ** – Polish Red Data Book (Głowaciński 2001) according to IUCN criteria:

CR (Critically Endangered)

EN (Endangered)

VU (Vulnerable)

NT (Near Threatened)

LC (Least Concern)

**BLI** – Bird Life International criteria

Table 1. Species of birds appeared on the Narew River National Park area

Breeding species	Number	DP	PCKZ	BLI
<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	4p			
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	12p			
<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	3p			
<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	23m	X	LC	
<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	0-2p	X	VU	
<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	4p	X		
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	3p			
<i>Anser anser</i>	9p			
<i>Anas crecca</i>	3p			
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	600p			
<i>Anas querquedula</i>	15p			
<i>Anas clypeata</i>	10p			
<i>Aythya ferina</i>	4p			
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	34p	X		
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	4p	X	VU	
<i>Circus pygargus</i>	2p	X		
<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	1p	X	LC	
<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	3p			
<i>Porzana porzana</i>	4p	X	EN	
<i>Porzana parva</i>	1p	X	NT	
<i>Crex crex</i>	19p	X		
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	4p			
<i>Fulica atra</i>	13p			

<i>Grus grus</i>	18p	X		
<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	3p			
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	180p			
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	2f	X	EN	
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	25p			
<i>Gallinago media</i>	2m	X	VU	
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	35p			
<i>Limosa limosa</i>	30p			
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	30p			
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	4p			
<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	250p			
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	3p	X		
<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	10p	X	LC	
<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	30p	X		
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	2p	X	VU	
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	200p			
<i>Motacilla flava</i>	150p			
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	70p			
<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	13p	X	NT	
<i>Locustella naevia</i>	70p			
<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	27p			
<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	75p			
<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	53m (35-42m)	X	VU	(C1,C6)
<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	500p			
<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	10p			
<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	3000p			
<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	250p			
<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	5p			
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	2000p			

Criterion 3. Narew River National Park provides a variety of habitats to species important for maintaining biological diversity of sub-boreal biogeographical region (region of deciduous forests of Central Europe). Of special value is the richness of local vegetation (41 plant communities) and flora that includes 200 vascular species, numerous bryophytes and fungi, myxomycetes and algae. Local fauna embraces 33 species of mammals, 200 bird species including 154 species of breeding birds, 13 amphibian species and 22 fish species.

Criterion 4. The site supports migrating waterfowl – ducks, plovers and ruffs (ruff flocks up to 4 000 individuals), in total including 154 species of breeding birds.

Table 2. Species of birds appeared on the Narew River National Park area

Migrating/breeding/wintering species
<i>Cygnus olor</i>
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
<i>Anser anser</i>
<i>Anser fabalis</i>
<i>Anser albifrons</i>
<i>Anas strepera</i>
<i>Anas crecca</i>
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
<i>Anas acuta</i>
<i>Anas querquedula</i>
<i>Anas clypeata</i>
<i>Aythya ferina</i>

<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
<i>Gallinago media</i>
<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
<i>Limosa limosa</i>
<i>Tringa totanus</i>
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
<i>Tringa glareola</i>

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).

**13. 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:**

Geobotanical region of deciduous forests of Central Europe at the edge of the East-European region of mixed forests (boreal) – according to the Polish regionalisation by Jerzy Kondracki, 2001: Regional geography of Poland.

The region embraces eastern part of Denmark, southernmost Sweden, central and north-eastern Germany and most of the territory of Poland except for its two mountain ranges (Alpine region) and the north-eastern edge of the country, belonging to sub-boreal or East-European mixed forest biogeographic region.

According to EEA – the region is identified as “continental” (EEA publication 2002: Europe’s biodiversity – biogeographical regions and seas).

**b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme** (include reference citation):

As above Kondracki – 2001 and/or EEA publication 2002

According to biogeographic regionalization scheme of the EU Habitat Directive there is a continental type (natural and semi-natural grassland formations as well as raised bogs and mires and fens).

**14. 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.

The site is located in the Northern Podlasie Lowland in the old river valley of post-glacial origin. The Narew River valley of the width of 2 – 4 km is flat and swampy. The River flows through multiple riverbeds that alternatively separate and unite creating irregular, complex network. Apart from active riverbeds there are many oxbows and old channels overgrown fully or partially by wetland vegetation. Active channels are fairly deep, from 3 – 6 m or even deeper. The channels are separated with sandy islets rising above flat bottom of the valley and in spring are inundated by freshet waters. One flooding period normally occurs due to snow melting during early spring and there is one period of low water between July and October. The River is fringed with fens (fluviogenous mires) and covered by reed and sedge beds, and interspersed by willow shrubs and alder and birch woods. Soils are mostly organic - muddy, peaty or develop from decaying peats. Water quality is generally low, but steadily improving in view of the progress in water treatment. Local climate is considered continental with low temperatures of winter months and high amplitude of yearly averages amounting to 23°C.

**15. Physical features of the catchment area:**

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

Areas surrounding the Park are uplands raising about 5 – 25 m above the valley. The landscape is undulating with moraine hills of post-glacial origin. Soils are low peats, podzols and brown earths,

and adjacent land is used for agriculture (meadows and pastures) and for forestry. Regional climate has distinct continental features as described under previous paragraph.

### 16. Hydrological values:

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

The site is one of unique examples of complex wetland with multi-bed lowland river with oxbows and old channels overgrown by wetland vegetation. The fall of the main riverbed is only 0.19%. In view of a dam built upstream the River gets less water and flows slowly amid swamps. The swampy valley acts as a sink for runoff and subsurface flow and helps to maintain the local hydrological balance.

### 17. 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 •  $\sqrt{M}$  • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp • Ts •  $\sqrt{U}$  • Va • Vt • W •  $\sqrt{Xf}$  •  $\sqrt{Xp}$  • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

**Human-made:** 1 •  $\sqrt{2}$  • 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.

M, U, Xp, Xf

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Ts, Tp and W are not occurring in this case.

### 18. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Habitat diversity of the site is linked with a gradient of hydrological and geomorphological conditions, from the riverbed to dry mineral grounds at the valley edge. Several vegetation zones can be distinguished depending on ground waterlogging, from aquatic, immersed all year round, emmersed with mosses and sedges to willow shrubs, alder forest and dry hornbeam-oak woods with xeric vegetation at the wing of the valley. Almost 50% of the Polish variety of aquatic communities can be found within the site. The vegetation cover of the site is diverse with 30 associations of reed bed and aquatic plants, four meadow communities, two xeric associations, two communities of willow shrubs and three forest communities growing on organic and mineral soils. Typical of the wetland are hydrogenic habitats with communities of reeds (*Phragmitetum australis*, *Phalaridetum arundinaceae*, *Glycerietum maximae*), taking about 30 % of the Park surface, and of tall sedges (*Caricetum elatae*, *C. rostratae*, *C. appropinquatae*, *C. acutae*), taking about 15% of the area as well as communities of water lilies and whorled water milfoil (*Nuphar-Nymphaetum* and *Myriophylletum verticillati*), water soldier and common frogbit (*Hydrocharitetum morsuranae*).

### 19. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. 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.*

Amongst the flora of the Narew River National Park several species are rare, endangered and protected. Such status have the following species: white water lily (*Nymphaea alba*), yellow water lily (*Nuphar lutea*), small water lily (*Nuphar pumilum*), Siberian iris (*Iris sibirica*), *Polemonium coeruleum*, heath spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*), Irish marsh orchid (*D. majalis*), lesser butterfly orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*), marsh pea (*Lathyrus palustris*), gladiolus (*Gladiolus imbricatus*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), crested fern (*Dryopteris cristata*) and pink (*Dianthus superbus*). The most characteristic species of hydrogenic habitats within the Park include reed, yellow water lily, common frogbit, water soldier, whorled water milfoil,

white water lily, bog arum (*Calla palustris*), branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and reedmaces (*Typha angustifolia* and *T. latifolia*). Species of mires and wet meadows could become especially threatened in view of abandoning traditional land use practices in the valley.

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**20. Noteworthy fauna:**

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. 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 Park is the IBAE Poland bird site of European importance supporting 200 bird species. Among them rare and threatened waterfowl such as Montague's harrier (*C. pygargus*), crane (*Grus grus*), aquatic warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*), bearded tit (*Panurus biarmicus*), bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), black tern (*Chlidonias niger*), water rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), snipe (*Gallinago media*), bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*), Savi's warbler (*Locustella luscinioides*) – up to 75 pairs and spotted crake (*Porzana porzana*). The site also supports important population of sedge warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) - up to 500 pairs. The site provides feeding and resting refuge for migrating waterfowl, especially in spring, for ducks, plovers and ruffs (up to 4 000 individuals).

Mammal fauna includes 33 species of which most valuable are: beaver (*Castor fiber*) – about 200 individuals, European elk (*Alces alces*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), European water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*), common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) and Eurasian pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*). Within the site 13 amphibian species have been found including rare and valuable – common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*) and natterjack (*Bufo calamita*).

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**21. Social and 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.

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Traditionally, wet meadows of the park were used for cattle grazing and haymaking but in view of recent social and economic transformations a part of local meadows is no longer mown or grazed, therefore the valley is threatened with forest succession. Local farmers still fish in the River.

Historic monuments are located in the Park buffer zone – a XIX century mansion with an old country park in Kurowo, and in Choroszcz, outside the Park buffer zone, there are several old, catholic and orthodox churches. In the neighbouring villages old wooden farmhouses have been preserved.

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**22. Land tenure/ownership:**

(a) within the Ramsar site:

30% of the Park land belongs to the State Treasury and 70% is privately owned.

(b) in the surrounding area:

Most agricultural land in the vicinity is in private ownership.

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**23. Current land (including water) use:**

(a) within the Ramsar site:

Agriculture, forestry

(b) in the surroundings/catchment:

As above

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**24. 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:

A main factor that might adversely affect the ecological character of the site is diminished water input upstream in view of the Siemianowka dam at the Byelorussian-Polish border. Water pollution is caused by towns located upstream (Lapy).

Another important factor is draining and cessation of meadow mowing and cattle grazing that threatens bird habitats in the Valley. Expansion of reedbeds observed over the last 30 years results in shrinking of valuable open biotopes and contributes to decrease in local biodiversity.

(b) in the surrounding area:

Changes in land use, abandoning of former agricultural practices, water pollution, urban pressure.

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**25. Conservation measures taken:**

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

The site is since 1996 protected as a national park – the highest form of area protection in Poland, and is surrounded by a buffer zone of 15 408 ha. Formerly the site was protected as a landscape park. Recently, measures have been undertaken in the Narew River Valley to restore and/or maintain mire biotopes. The most important are reed mowing on mires and swamps while in the southern part of the Park cattle grazing has been maintained. Work is undertaken to bring back to natural state some parts of the Valley in the Park buffer zone. The protection plan for the Park is prepared but not implemented.

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**26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

The protection plan for the Park is ready but not yet implemented. The most valuable fragments of the Narew Valley shall be submitted to a stricter form of protection.

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**27. Current scientific research and facilities:**

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

For several years a study has been conducted on sedimentation processes in the River Valley. Forests surrounding the site are embraced by pest insect monitoring done by the forest service. Local bird populations have been studied for several years by the Centre of Bird Study and Protection at Bialowieza.

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**28. Current conservation education:**

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

A visitor centre operates at the Park Management in Kurowo in addition to the museum of Narew River swamps. All facilities are located in the local historical mansion. In the Park there are four tourist trails of a length of 80 km, two observation hides and one educational path in addition to ecological education centre. A research facility is in the course of organisation.

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**29. Current recreation and tourism:**

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

The site is used for tourist and recreation purposes, main form of recreation use is kayaking and hiking. Canoeing rallies are being organised every year on the Narew River. Visitor movement is estimated to be about 5 – 10 thousand persons annually, what gives 0.7 – 1.4 persons/hectare/year.

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**30. Jurisdiction:**

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

The Park is located in the Podlasie Voivodeship and functionally is under the Ministry of Environment.

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**31. 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 proposed site is managed by the Director of the Narew River National Park.

n timer@n timer.pl

Narew River National Park homepage – <http://www.n timer.pl>

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**32. Bibliographical references:**

scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Kondracki J., 2001: Regional geography of Poland ed. by Panstwowe Wydawnictwa Naukowe, Warsaw

EEA publication 2002: Europe's biodiversity – biogeographical regions and seas.

Sienkiewicz J., Walczak M., Smogorzewska M., Nowak S., Nowicki W., Kloss M., Wójcik J., 1999: Documentation of sites listed by the Ramsar Convention and proposed to the List. Institute of Environmental Protection, Warsaw.

Polish Red Data Book of Animals, 2001: Editor: Z.Głowacinski. PWRiL, Warszawa.

Polish Red Data Book of Plants, 2001: Editors: R. Kazmierczakowa, K. Zarzycki. W. Szafer Institute of Botany, Institute of Nature Conservation. Krakow.

Gromadzki M. et al. 1994: Bird Areas in Poland. OTOP. Biblioteka Monitoringu Srodowiska, Krakow.

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