



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Bulgaria

**11 Ramsar Site(s) covering 49,913 ha**

### **Atanasovo Lake**

Site number: 292 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Burgas  
Area: 1,404 ha | Coordinates: 42°34'N 27°28'E | Designation dates: 28-11-1984  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Atanasovsko Lake. 28/11/84; Burgas; 1,404 ha; 42°34'N 027°28'E. Partially Maintained Reserve. The site has been extended from 1,050 ha to 1,404 ha in 2002. Situated on the southern Bulgarian coast, Atanasovsko is one of the four lakes of the Burgas wetland complex surrounding the city. The wetland has a highly recognized significance for biodiversity and as a resource pool for various products utilized by people. It is a shallow hypersaline lagoon associated with salt marshes, reedbeds, a complex of salt pans (outside the Ramsar sites) and settling pools surrounded by a dike and a freshwater canal. This is one of the two salinas in the Black Sea region and demonstrates rare and representative examples of wetland habitats. A hot spot for biodiversity with many red-listed species of plants and animals, it is a well-known bottleneck site for migratory birds with around 60,000 raptors and 240,000 storks, pelicans and cranes passing over the site and often landing in large numbers for staging - the highest numbers in Europe of migrating White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus*, Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*, and Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* have been recorded here, and the site is a very popular destination for birdwatchers, photographers, scientists and bird ringers from nearby and abroad. The main human uses are salt production and extraction of curative mud. A management plan will soon be approved. Active organizations include the Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme, the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds/BirdLife Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre. Ramsar site no. 292. Most recent RIS information: 2002.

### **Belene Islands Complex**

Site number: 1,226 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Veliko Tarnovo and Pleven  
Area: 18,330 ha | Coordinates: 43°39'N 25°09'E | Designation dates: 24-09-2002  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Belene Islands Complex. 24/09/02; Pleven; 18,330 ha; 43°40'00"N 025°11'00"E; Natura 2000 (SPA, SAC), Managed Reserve, Nature Park. The Ramsar Site has been extended by 11,432 ha with the inclusion of additional islands and agricultural lands on the Danube river banks. The Site is formed by a complex of one big island (Belene) and nine smaller islands, characterized by freshwater marshes, seasonally-flooded riverine forests, and agricultural and semi-natural land cut by drainage channels. It is exceptionally biodiverse and hosts several rare species of plants including white waterlily *Nymphaea alba* and water shamrock *Marsilea quadrifolia*, as well as globally threatened species of birds such as the Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, great bustard *Otis tarda* and aquatic warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. The Site is also important for mammals, amphibians and fish. It plays an important role in flood mitigation and sediment trapping. The main threats are related to drainage projects for navigation purposes and habitat degradation caused by the abundant population of wild boar. Part of Belene island has been utilized as a prison since 1948. Other human activities include agriculture, farming and small-scale timber harvesting. Large-scale wetland restoration projects have been successfully completed, a visitor's centre has been built and a new management plan for the Site has been approved and implemented. Ramsar Site no. 1226. Most recent RIS information: 2014.

## Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex

Site number: 1,970 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Sofia District

Area: 14,967 ha | Coordinates: 42°55'N 23°04'E | Designation dates: 02-11-2011

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex. 11/02/11; 14,967 ha; 42°56'N 023°01'E. Protected area, Natura 2000 site. Comprises marshes, wet meadows, several karst springs, two artificial lakes, including the Petarch Fishponds, and the Blato River. Dragoman marsh itself is the biggest limestone marsh in Bulgaria and is particularly rich in biodiversity. 256 bird species (61% of Bulgarian avifauna) have been recorded, including internationally endangered species like Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* and the Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*. Breeding bird species include Ferruginous duck *Aythya nyroca* and Great bittern *Botaurus stellaris*. The area is also important as a stopover site for water bird species like Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*. Additionally, many other species can be found that are protected on an international, European or national level. This includes amphibians (e.g. Southern Crested Newt *Triturus karelinii*), reptiles (e.g. European Pond Turtle *Emys orbicularis*), mammals (including bats like the Barbastelle Bat *Barbastella barbastellus* and others such as the Lesser Mole Rat *Nannospalax leucodon* and the Marbled Polecat *Vormela peregusna*) butterflies (e.g. Large Copper *Lycaena dispar*), dragonflies and vascular plant species (e.g.: the Waterwheel Plant *Aldrovanda vesiculosa*, and orchid *Himantoglossum caprinum*). 10 plant species, including tulip species (*Tulipa urumoffii*) are endemic either to Bulgaria or the Balkan Peninsula. The site also has an important role in flood control and ensures good water quality for the surrounding villages. Threats include pollution by untreated wastewaters and a big quarry located within the boundaries of the site. A Wetland Conservation Centre was opened in Dragoman city in 2009 and a website is under preparation ([www.balkani.org/wetlands](http://www.balkani.org/wetlands)). Ramsar Site no. 1970. Most recent RIS information: 2011.

## Durankulak Lake

Site number: 293 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Dobrich Province

Area: 350 ha | Coordinates: 43°42'N 28°30'E | Designation dates: 28-11-1984

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Durankulak Lake. 28/11/84; Varna; 350 ha; 43°42'N 028°30'E. Added to the Montreux Record 16 June 1993. Protected Landscape. A slightly saline, coastal lake in an advanced state of nutrient-enrichment, supplied with water by two springs. The area is important for several species of breeding birds and numerous species of wintering and staging birds. A diverse algal flora consisting of over 70 species is present. Various rare and endemic fish species occur at the site. Due to the combined impacts of nutrient-enrichment, groundwater abstraction, and virtually unregulated hunting, the site was put on the Montreux Record in 1993. Ramsar site no. 293.

## Ibisha Island

Site number: 1,227 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Montana

Area: 3,365 ha | Coordinates: 43°49'N 23°31'E | Designation dates: 24-09-2002

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Ibisha Island. 24/09/02. Montana; 3,365 ha; 43°49'40"N 023°31'00"E; Important Bird Area, CORINE, Natura 2000 (SPA, SAC). A complex of small islands on the River Danube along the country's northern boundary with Romania, the Site has been extended by 2,993 ha to include additional islands and an area with agricultural and semi-natural lands. It is of international importance for the conservation of mammals, amphibians and threatened species of waterbirds such as the pygmy cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, lesser white-fronted goose *Anser erythropus*, red-breasted goose *Branta ruficollis* and the Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus*. Ibisha Island itself is covered with seasonally flooded riverine forest of *Alnus* spp., *Salix* spp. and *Populus* spp. The Site plays an important role in regulating floods and trapping sediment. Human uses include forestry, fishing, agriculture and research. Intensive forestry activities disturb the birds during the breeding season. Additionally, the use of non-native species in forestry activities has resulted in the disappearance of natural floodplain forest on the river banks. A management plan was being developed in 2014. Ramsar Site no. 1227. Most recent RIS information: 2014.

## Lake Shabla

Site number: 801 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Dobrich  
Area: 404 ha | Coordinates: 43°35'N 28°33'E | Designation dates: 19-03-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Lake Shabla. 19/03/96; 404 ha; 43°35'N 028°33'E. Shablensko ezero (Shabla Lake), Protected Area. Two brackish, coastal lakes connected by an artificial canal. The lakes overlie an horizon of sand 4-5m thick deposited on top of a rich peat layer; evidence of a long marsh period. Limestone forms huge karst fields in parts of the wetland. An internationally important area for the endangered Redbreasted goose (*Branta ruficollis*), providing wintering habitat for over 75% of the world population and up to 180,000 wintering White-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons*). The site supports various species of breeding birds and endemic birds and the endangered plants *Cladium mariscus*, *Nuphar lutea*, *Nymphaea alba*. The wetlands serve as water supply for domestic and industrial use, agriculture irrigation, fishing, angling and livestock grazing. Ramsar site no. 801. Most recent RIS information: 1996.

## Poda

Site number: 1,228 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Burgas  
Area: 307 ha | Coordinates: 42°27'N 27°27'E | Designation dates: 24-09-2002

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Poda. 24/09/02; Burgas; 307 ha; 42°27'N 027°27'E. Partially Protected Area. A marshy wetland and adjacent sea bay located on the outskirts of the city of Burgas on the Black Sea coast. Although naturally formed as part of the Burgas-Mandra firth, the coastal wetland has deteriorated due to human interference in 1960s and later evolved into a mosaic of different habitats - freshwater, brackish, saline and hyper-saline pools, and flooded areas overgrown with aquatic vegetation. The site includes the shallow sea bay Phoros. The site has outstanding significance for biodiversity conservation, and more than 260 rare, vulnerable and endangered species of plants and animals have been recorded, among them eight globally threatened bird species and one globally threatened animal species (Otter *Lutra lutra*) - some species with restricted distribution also occur, like the Etruscan Shrew *Suncus etruscus*. Poda is an important breeding ground for some waterbirds (a mixed colony of glossy ibises, spoonbills - the only place along the Bulgarian coast where the spoonbill breeds - and five species of herons and egrets) and a valuable stopover site for migratory birds, and it hosts numerous winter concentrations of waterbirds, for many species often beyond the 1% threshold of the biogeographic population - Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus*, Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, and White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*. A management plan for the site, elaborated by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds/BirdLife Bulgaria (BSPB), is about to be approved by the Ministry of Environment and Waters. Ramsar site no. 1228. Most recent RIS information: 2002.

## Pomorie Wetland Complex

Site number: 1,229 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Burgas  
Area: 922 ha | Coordinates: 42°36'N 27°38'E | Designation dates: 24-09-2002

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Pomorie Wetland Complex (Pomorie Lake, Pomoriysko Ezero). 24/09/02; Burgas; 922 ha; 42°35'N 027°37'E. Protected Area, Natura 2000 (SPA, SCI), IBA. The major part of the site is a shallow coastal hyper-saline lagoon connected to the Black Sea by an artificial canal. Other associated wetland types are estuaries (River Akheloy), salt marshes, sand dunes, reed beds, salt pans, etc. The wetland has been designated chiefly for its uniqueness, as one of the two coastal hyper-saline lagoons in the Black Sea region converted into salinas, but it is also of high importance for the region's biodiversity. It supports many nationally and internationally red-listed plant and animal species - some 269 bird species have been recorded, including three globally threatened ones, and some that are adapted to the hyper-saline conditions. It is an important stopover site for migratory birds and offers suitable conditions for wintering of shelducks, swans, ducks, coots, etc., and for breeding of several species of plovers, avocets, stilts, and terns. The main human uses include sea salt production and the extraction of curative mud. Pomorie Lake Visitor Centre was opened in 2010, two eco-trails have been established and a salt museum explains the 2,000 years of traditional salt production that also give a particular cultural value to the site. (The site was extended in 2012 from 814 ha.) Ramsar Site no. 1229. Most recent RIS information: 2012.

## Ropotamo Complex

Site number: 65 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Burgas

Area: 5,500 ha | Coordinates: 42°19'N 27°45'E | Designation dates: 24-09-1975

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Ropotamo Complex (formerly called 'Arkoutino'). 24/09/75; Burgas; 5,500 ha; 42°19'N 027°45'E. Partially Reserve, Natural Monument, Maintained Reserve and Protected Area. The site has been extended from 97 ha to 5,500 ha and the name has been changed on 24/09/2002. The site, on the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast, represents a diverse mosaic of various habitats - river downstream and estuary, seasonally flooded riverine and broad-leaved deciduous forests, small freshwater and brackish lagoons, sand dunes, rocky shores and fjords, a sea bay, sea inlets. The site provides refuge to many nationally and internationally IUCN red-listed species of plants and animals, among which are seven globally threatened species of birds and two plant species, eight invertebrate species and seven mammal species. Rich endemic and relict flora and fauna are recorded in the site. The main human uses are forestry, hunting, and recreational activities, and the site is a very popular destination for nature lovers, offering some facilities as well. Management plans are in preparation, and the Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme is active at the site. Ramsar site no. 65. Most recent RIS information: 2002.

## Srébarna

Site number: 64 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region:

Area: 1,464 ha | Coordinates: 44°07'N 27°07'E | Designation dates: 24-09-1975

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Srebarna. 24/09/75; Silistra; 1,464 ha; 44°06'46"N 027°06'41"E. World Heritage Site, Biosphere Reserve, Natura 2000 (SPA, SAC), Managed Reserve. Added to the Montreux Record 16 June 1993. The site includes arable lands, forests, islets with reedbeds and a eutrophic freshwater lake which is the biggest marsh on the Bulgarian part of river Danube. The wetland is an important breeding, staging and wintering site for large number of birds – it is the only breeding site of *Pelecanus crispus*, with a colony of *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* as well as of the largest breeding population of *Aythya nyroca* in Bulgaria. Moreover, the site is also important for endangered fish communities such as the European Eel *Anguilla anguilla* and mammals like the European Marbled Polecat *Vormela peregusna*. The main hydrological values are groundwater recharge, flood control and sediment trapping. The major ecological changes in the site are connected with eutrophication leading to succession and increase of the sedimentation processes, which are triggering a decrease in biodiversity richness. Ramsar Advisory Missions took place in 1992 and 2001. The site boundary was extended in 2013 by the incorporation of the protected area Pelikanite. Ramsar site no. 64. Most recent RIS information: 2013.

## Vaya Lake

Site number: 1,230 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: District Center

Area: 2,900 ha | Coordinates: 42°30'N 27°25'E | Designation dates: 11-11-2002

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Vaya Lake. 11/11/02; Burgas; 2,900 ha; 42°30'N 027°25'E. Partially Protected Area. The largest Bulgarian lake, one of the four lakes of the Burgas wetland complex surrounding the city. The wetland, of very high significance for biodiversity (especially birds), is a shallow freshwater/brackish liman with associated marshy areas and extensive reedbeds (the largest in the country); fish farm basins, adjacent to the lake, are heavily overgrown by aquatic vegetation. In the site have been recorded several IUCN red-listed species of animals - 5 invertebrates, 4 fish, 4 amphibians, 3 reptiles, 5 birds and 3 mammals. Situated along the second largest migration path of birds in Europe, the "Via Pontica", the site is an important stopover and staging site for a large number of waterbirds, raptors and passerines. Yearly during migration and wintering more than 20,000 (up to 100,000) waterbirds congregate there, some species with more than the 1% threshold of the biogeographic population, including Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*, and White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*. Fishing and sand extraction are practiced. Among the most serious threats to the site are those associated with the country's only petrol refinery. A management plan is under elaboration. Organization active on the ground - the Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme. Ramsar site no. 1230. Most recent RIS information: 2002.