



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Bulgaria

11 Ramsar Site(s) covering 49,397 ha

### Atanasovsko Lake

Site number: 292 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Burgas Municipality, Burgas District of Bulgaria

Area: 1,995.1 ha | Coordinates: 42°33'54"N 27°28'29"E | Designation dates: 28-11-1984

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Atanasovsko is one of the four lakes of the Burgas wetland complex surrounding the city on the Black Sea coast. It is a shallow hyper-saline lagoon composed of salt marshes, reedbeds, a complex of salt pans and settling pools surrounded by a dike and a freshwater canal. The Site is one of the three most important wetland complexes for waterbirds along the coast, hosting 317 bird species and the largest populations in Bulgaria of pied avocet, black-winged stilt and Kentish plover, all of which are nationally threatened. A significant part of the Site is used for salt production using traditional methods. This is done in accordance with conservation objectives, and helps maintain the water regime to ensure the preservation of the Site's biodiversity. Overgrowing of reeds is the main threat, as it reduces the availability of open water and restricts potential nesting grounds for waterbirds. A yearly clean-up of reeds is organized to minimize this. The management plan for the Site was being updated in 2019.

### Belene Islands Complex

Site number: 1,226 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Veliko Tarnovo and Pleven

Area: 18,330 ha | Coordinates: 43°39'30"N 25°08'58"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; Dragoman, Godech, Slivnitsa and Kostinbrod Municipalities

Area: 14,941 ha | Coordinates: 42°55'17"N 23°03'35"E | Designation dates: 11-02-2011

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Situated between the Serbian border and the city of Sofia, Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex is the only limestone marsh in Bulgaria, and one of the biggest of the Balkan Peninsula. A unique variety of wetland types is found in the Complex: it contains karst marshes, wet meadows, peatlands, human-made lakes and fishponds. Because of this variety, the Site is biodiverse, hosting 256 bird species, 9 reptiles, 23 mammals and 180 vascular plant species. The bird species represent 61% of all those found in Bulgaria. From the 1930s onwards, the wetland was almost completely drained, including through the construction of channels and pumping stations. However in the 1990s these activities ceased and the Site started to be quickly restored, remarkably regaining most of the species that had abandoned its habitats. Despite this recovery, discharge of untreated wastewater, quarrying activities and land conversion still represent significant threats.

## Durankulak Lake

Site number: 293 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Shabla Municipality, Dobrich District of Bulgaria

Area: 1,370.8 ha | Coordinates: 43°40'24"N 28°32'26"E | Designation dates: 28-11-1984

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Durankulak, close to the northern border with Romania, is a brackish lake separated from the Black Sea by a narrow sand bar. It is located on the "Via Pontica", the second largest bird migratory route in Europe, so a large number of birds use the site as a stopover or wintering refuge. It is especially important for the internationally threatened red-breasted goose (*Branta ruficollis*) and the greater white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*), which over-winter in great numbers. The Lake hosts a total of 254 bird species, 92 of which are nesting; 72 are nationally threatened. Almost 22,000 individuals have been counted. Durankulak Lake also contains several plants endemic to the Balkans, and a diverse algal flora, consisting of over 70 different species. Several conservation measures are in place, including a 500-metre buffer zone in which hunting and pesticides are banned and fishing regulated. Despite that, the overgrowing of reeds and the increasing population of golden jackal are threats.

## Ibisha Island

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

Area: 3,365 ha | Coordinates: 43°48'46"N 23°30'31"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.

## Poda

Site number: 1,228 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Burgas Municipality, Burgas District of Bulgaria

Area: 307 ha | Coordinates: 42°27'11"N 27°27'46"E | Designation dates: 24-09-2002

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site on the outskirts of the city of Burgas on the Black Sea coast features marshes, freshwater, brackish, saline and hyper-saline pools, and a shallow bay. It is one of the most important wetlands in Bulgaria for the variety of bird species: despite its relatively small area, 252 different species have been recorded. Several are internationally threatened, including the slender-billed curlew, white-headed duck, horned grebe, and the Dalmatian pelican which is present in internationally significant numbers. These species use the Site as a stopover during their migration and as breeding grounds. A significant threat is the natural expansion of reedbeds, which reduces the availability of open water and nesting grounds for some birds. As of 2019, the Site's management plan was being updated.

## Pomorie Wetland Complex

Site number: 1,229 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Burgas

Area: 922 ha | Coordinates: 42°35'44"N 27°37'34"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 shellducks, 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: Primorsko and Sozopol Municipalities, Burgas District of Bulgaria

Area: 3,384.6 ha | Coordinates: 42°18'45"N 27°44'34"E | Designation dates: 24-09-1975

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Ropotamo Complex, on the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast, is comprised of the downstream stretch and estuary of the Ropotamo River, seasonally flooded forests, small freshwater and brackish lagoons, sand dunes, a bay and various inlets. Because of its variety of habitats, the wetland is very biodiverse, hosting 60% of Bulgaria's reptile species, 57% of its mammals, 60% of its freshwater fish and 50% of its nesting birds. 255 different bird species have been recorded. The Complex provides habitat for a number of threatened plants and animals, including the marbled duck, yelkouan shearwater, spotless shad (*Alosa immaculata*), European eel, Greek tortoise and thick grasshopper (*Platypygius crassus*). The main human uses are forestry, hunting, and recreational activities, and the wetland is a very popular tourist destination. Threats include urban development affecting the Alepu Marsh, unfavourable management practices, eutrophication, illegal poaching and forest logging.

## Shabla Lake

Site number: 801 | Country: Bulgaria | Administrative region: Shabla Municipality, Dobrich District of Bulgaria

Area: 417.9 ha | Coordinates: 43°34'37"N 28°34'01"E | Designation dates: 13-03-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Shabla Lake, on the northern Bulgarian Black Sea coastline, is composed of two brackish coastal lakes connected by a narrow artificial canal. The lakes are surrounded by fields and a sandbar. Several fish, amphibian and invertebrate species are nationally listed, and a large number of threatened plant species are found on the sand dunes. The site is frequented by 248 bird species, 96 of which nest there, and 88 over-winter; 69 of them are listed as nationally threatened. Shabla Lake is especially important for the globally threatened red-breasted goose (*Branta ruficollis*), which winters there in large numbers. In addition, many egrets, herons, diving and dabbling ducks, waders and sometimes pelicans visit during spring and autumn migrations. The main threats are urbanization and water pollution caused by intensive agriculture in the neighbouring farmlands. As of 2019, the management plan for the Site was being updated.

## Srēbarna

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

Area: 1,464 ha | Coordinates: 44°06'46"N 27°06'41"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: Burgas Municipality, Burgas District of Bulgaria

Area: 2,900 ha | Coordinates: 42°29'49"N 27°23'44"E | Designation dates: 11-11-2002

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Vaya Lake is one of the four lakes of the Burgas wetland complex surrounding the city on the Black Sea coast. It is the largest Bulgarian coastal lake, and is connected to the sea through a canal which gives the water a brackish composition. The Site hosts more than 74,000 waterbirds of 240 different species during migration periods. It also hosts numerous plant and animal species which are protected under the Biological Diversity Act of Bulgaria and listed as threatened under the national and global Red Lists. These include the white-headed duck, red-breasted goose, European eel and Greek tortoise. The operation of a petrol refinery close to the lake caused some significant changes in the past, as has the establishment of a wastewater treatment plant. There is no Site-specific management plan, but the Site is managed through the National Action Plan for Conservation of Wetlands of High Significance.