Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

Estonia

17 Ramsar Site(s) covering 304,811 ha

Agusalu
Site number: 1,999  |  Country: Estonia  |  Administrative region: Ida-Viru
Area: 11,000 ha  |  Coordinates: 59°04'30"N 27°33'03"E  |  Designation dates: 27-01-2010

Part of Estonia’s largest mire system Agusalu-Puhatu, the wetland consists of bogs, transition mires and fens surrounded by coniferous and alluvial forest. The wetland has a characteristic striped landscape as it contains several strips of sandy hills, locally named “kriivas”, which form forest and bog islands that stand out from the mire. Agusalu is important for maintaining the biodiversity of the biogeographical region thanks to its varied habitats. The area provides important breeding grounds for several threatened bird species, such as Eurasian black grouse (Lyrurus tetrix), willow grouse (Lagopus lagopus) and Arctic loon (Gavia arctica). It is also an important refuge for species with large habitat requirements such as brown bear (Ursus arctos), grey wolf (Canis lupus), moose (Alces alces), Eurasian otter (Lutra lutra) and Eurasian lynx (Lynx lynx). Due to its management and protection regime the area is not frequented, but intensification of forestry and drainage activities in the surrounding areas present threats.

Alam-Pedja
Site number: 905  |  Country: Estonia  |  Administrative region: Tartu,Jõgeva,Viljandi Counties
Area: 34,220 ha  |  Coordinates: 58°28'N 26°13'E  |  Designation dates: 05-06-1997

Alam-Pedja. 17/06/97; Tartu, Jõgeva, & Viljandi Counties; 34,220 ha; 58°28'N 026°13'E. Nature Reserve, Natura 2000, IBA. A large, mostly flat wilderness area with a complex of mires separated by unregulated rivers and associated floodplain meadows and surrounded by extensive forests, including swamp forest or carrs of special botanical value. The area is a very important spawning site for several fish species, an important stop-over site for numerous species of migrating waterfowl, many of them threatened, and it supports a rich assemblage of mammals. The site is used for traditional berry-picking and small-scale fishing and plays an important role in groundwater hydrology and maintenance of water quality. A visitor’s centre was opened in 2008 including two nature trails. (The site was extended in 2012 from originally 26,000 ha). Ramsar site no. 905. Most recent RIS information: 2012.
Emajõe Suursoo Mire and Piirissaar Island

**Site number:** 906  |  **Country:** Estonia  |  **Administrative region:** Tartu
**Area:** 32,600 ha  |  **Coordinates:** 58°22'59"N 27°18'E  |  **Designation dates:** 05-06-1997

**View Site details in RSIS**

Emajõe Suursoo Mire and Piirissaar Island. 17/06/97; Tartu County; 32,600 ha; 58°23'N 027°18'E. Mire Reserve, Zoological-Botanical Reserve. A large wilderness area of various types of peatland, rivers, lakes, coasts, and islands. Vegetation consists of fens, swamps, swamp forests, peat bogs, mixed forests, reedbeds, and agricultural areas. The site is an important spawning area for various fish species. Numerous species of vulnerable waterbirds use the site for breeding, molting or staging. The site supports several amphibian, fish, plant and bird species that are vulnerable, endangered or endemic. Human activities include fishing, farming, hunting, seasonally intensive berry picking, and boating. An extremely important area for the hydrology of Lake Peipsi. Ramsar site no. 906. Most recent RIS information: 1997.

Endla

**Site number:** 907  |  **Country:** Estonia  |  **Administrative region:** Jõgeva, Järva, Lääne-Viru Counties
**Area:** 10,110 ha  |  **Coordinates:** 58°52'N 26°09'E  |  **Designation dates:** 05-06-1997

**View Site details in RSIS**

Endla. 17/06/97; Jõgeva, Järva, Lääne-Viru Counties; 10,110 ha; 58°52'N 026°09'E. Nature Reserve, Natura 2000 (SPA and SCI), IBA. A freshwater ecosystem of peat bogs, swamp forests, freshwater lakes, and rivers. Vegetation includes dwarf pine shrub, reedbeds, and threatened orchid species. Numerous species of vulnerable or endangered waterbirds use the area for breeding. Human activities include agriculture and sport fishing, and the site is an important area for water supply, conservation education, and scientific research. Educational facilities include a visitors centre, nature trails and watching towers. (The site has been extended in 2012 from originally 8,050 ha.) Ramsar Site no. 907. Most recent RIS information: 2012.

Haapsalu-Noarootsi

**Site number:** 2,022  |  **Country:** Estonia  |  **Administrative region:** Lääne County
**Area:** 27,450 ha  |  **Coordinates:** 59°08'03"N 23°27'29"E  |  **Designation dates:** 08-02-2011

**View Site details in RSIS**

Haapsalu-Noarootsi. 08/02/11; Lääne County; 27,450 ha; 59°08'04"N 23°27'29"E. Limited-Conservation Area, Nature Reserve, Landscape Reserve, SPA, SCI, IBA. A wetland complex situated on the northwestern coast comprising vast shallow Baltic Sea areas, inlets and bays, coastal lagoons, coastal meadows, and reedbeds as well as mud- and sandflats. The site is important as a wintering, staging, molting and breeding site for 225 different bird species, including Long-tailed Duck Clangula hyemalis, Common Eider Somateria mollissima and globally threatened Lesser White-fronted Goose Anser erythropus. At least 20% of the water birds migrating over the Baltic Sea (up to 2 million individuals) pass through this site. It is also one of the biggest spring spawning grounds in western Estonia for freshwater fish such as Pike Esox lucius. Several rare and nationally protected plant species can be found as well as species protected on the European level like Fen Orchid Liparis loeselii. Threats to the site include the overgrowing of coastal grasslands due to abandonment, impacts of waste water from Haapsalu town, and an increase in invasive alien species. Two conservation projects have recently been carried out in the site to restore valuable habitats and enhance ecotourism facilities. A Nature Information Centre has been set up in Haapsalu and the site can be visited for hiking, bird watching, camping, and boat trips. Ramsar Site no. 2022. Most recent RIS information: 2011.
Hiiumaa Islets and Käina Bay
Site number: 908  |  Country: Estonia  |  Administrative region: Hiiu County, Hiiumaa Island
Area: 17,700 ha  |  Coordinates: 58°48'N 22°58'E  |  Designation dates: 05-06-1997

Hiiumaa Islets and Käina Bay. 17/06/97; Hiiu Country, Hiiumaa Island; 17,700 ha; 58°48'N 022°58'E. Landscape Reserve, Ornithological Reserve, Biosphere Reserve, IBA. Shallow watershelf sea with small islets, mudflats and bays. Vegetation includes coastal meadow, saltmarshes, reedbeds, juniper and Alnus glutinosa and Pinus sylvestris coppices. The site supports endangered orchid-rich communities and a unique and endangered broad-leaved forest (Quercus-Tilia-Acer community) and is an important spawning area for several fish species. Numerous species of waterbirds breed, and internationally important numbers of migrating birds stop over at the site. Human activities include tourism, environmental education, agriculture, fishing, and extensive cattle grazing. Ramsar site no. 908. Most recent RiS information: 1997.

Laidevahe
Site number: 1,271  |  Country: Estonia  |  Administrative region: Saare County, Saaremaa Island
Area: 2,424 ha  |  Coordinates: 58°18'54"N 22°51'53"E  |  Designation dates: 24-03-2003

Laidevahe is a wetland complex on the southern coast of Saaremaa Island in the Baltic Sea. It features a broad diversity of coastal and aquatic habitats including lagoons, shallow coastal lakes, more than 40 small islands, coastal meadows, saltmarshes and extensive reed beds. The wetland has a rich plant biodiversity, hosting 541 different species, 31 of which are nationally protected. The complex is important for a number of bird species that use it for breeding and as a migration stopover. These include internationally vulnerable species such as the velvet scoter (Melanitta fusca) and horned grebe (Podiceps auritus), and also nationally endangered species such as the dunlin (Calidris alpina schinzii) and ruddy turnstone (Arenaria interpres). The wetland is also an important source of food, shelter and spawning grounds for several fish species, most notably the critically endangered European eel (Anguilla anguilla). Overgrowing of reeds is a threat to the coastal meadows, and can potentially reduce their biodiversity. Commercial activities such as overfishing, forestry and recreation activities in the area and its surroundings also present a potential threat to the wetland.

Leidissoo
Site number: 1,998  |  Country: Estonia  |  Administrative region: Lääne
Area: 8,178 ha  |  Coordinates: 59°06'25"N 23°44'07"E  |  Designation dates: 27-01-2010

Part of an extensive wilderness area in north-western Estonia, Leidissoo consists of a variety of mire types and habitats of Europe-wide interest, and plays a significant role in the hydrological balance of the region. Open fens are prominent, while in the western area of the Site bog communities can also be found. Leidissoo is one of the few such habitats in Estonia that are maintained in their natural state rather than being drained, and so the wetland supports plants and animals which are important for the biogeographical region. These include many bird species listed under the European Birds Directive Annex I, including the black stork (Ciconia nigra), corncrake (Crex crex) and black grouse (Lyrurus tetrix), while the Site provides breeding grounds for other species such as the common snipe (Gallinago gallinago), of which 200 pairs have been recorded. Traditional berry and mushroom picking, as well as small-scale hunting, are practiced. Threats include the intensification of forestry and the drainage of surrounding areas.
Lihula
Site number: 1,997 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Lääne and Pärnu County
Area: 6,620 ha | Coordinates: 58°39'N 23°55'59"E | Designation dates: 27-01-2010
View Site details in RSIS

Lihula. 27/01/10; Lääne & Pärnu Counties; 6,620 ha; 58°39'N 023°56'E. Landscape Reserve, Natura 2000 (SCI and partly SPA), Pan European Ecological Network, part of IBA. A large intact mire complex, characteristic for the EU Boreal biogeographic region, consisting of open plateau bog surrounded by open and wooded fens as well as peatland forests. The site plays a significant role in maintaining the hydrological balance and water quality of the region and provides important wetland habitats for specific flora and fauna, including rare and endangered species. It acts as a feeding and resting site for migrating cranes, geese (Anser fabalis, A. albifrons), and Ruff Philomachus pugnax, and many bird species occuring and breeding in the site are of European interest, such as Montagu’s Harrier Circus pygargus and Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria. Furthermore, the site supports populations of many large mammals including Wolf Canis lupus, Lynx Lynx lynx, Brown Bear Ursus arctos, and Elk Alces alces. Traditional berry and mushroom picking as well as small-scale hunting are practiced within the site. Threats to the site include the intensification of forestry, the drainage of surrounding areas, and the abandonment of semi-natural meadows. A management plan is awaiting approval, and a bog nature trail is planned on the northern edge of the mire. Ramsar Site no. 1997. Most recent RIS information: 2012.

Luitemaa
Site number: 1,962 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Pärnu County
Area: 11,240 ha | Coordinates: 58°10'N 24°34'59"E | Designation dates: 27-01-2010
View Site details in RSIS

Luitemaa. 27/01/10; Pärnu County, 11,240 ha; 58°10'N 024°35'E. Nature Reserve, IBA, Natura 2000. A mosaic wetland complex located on the southwestern coast of Estonia with a diversity of coastal and inland habitats including shallow sea, capes and islands, coastal meadows and reed-beds. Dunes, mires, dry and wet forest stands are characteristic of the site and many of its habitat types are listed under the EU Habitats Directive. The site supports a diverse number of internationally and nationally threatened species of birds as well as a number of threatened mammals, amphibians, reptiles and plants. Luitemaa ("land of dunes") is also a refuge for animals with large habitat requirements and as such is important as a breeding site for Wolf Canis lupus and Lynx Lynx lynx, as well as a hibernation site for Brown Bear Ursus arctos. It regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds, including Barnacle Geese Branta leucopsis (>15000), Eurasian Wigeon Anas penelope (>10000) and Eurasian Teal Anas crecca (>10000). The site is furthermore an important spawning ground for internationally threatened fish species like Sea Trout Salmo trutta and River Lamprey Lampetra fluviatilis. Peat excavation was stopped at the site; however, the abandoned area is in need of restoration. The Nature Reserve is important for ecotourism, especially for bird-watching. A management plan is in preparation. Ramsar Site number: 1962. Most recent RIS information: 2011.

Matsalu Nature Reserve
Site number: 104 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Lääne County
Area: 48,610 ha | Coordinates: 58°45'N 23°40'E | Designation dates: 29-03-1994
View Site details in RSIS

Matsalu Nature Reserve. 29/03/94; 48,610 ha; 58°45'N 023°40'E. A wetland consisting of Kasari delta, Matsalu Bay, coastal and alluvial flooded meadows, reedbeds, forests and the shallow Moonsund waters with islets. An important waterbird nesting and migration site for species such as Grus grus (15,000 counted one evening), Branta leucopsis, Cygnus cygnus and Anser anser (400 nesting pairs, about 5,000 migrating). The site is also important for raptors and carnivores. Rich in flora, there are 700 species of vascular plants with six species under protection, including Malus sylvestris, Prunus spinosa, Oxytropis pilosa. The Reserve is used primarily for fishing, traditional grazing, haymaking practices, and on a lower scale, for forestry and hunting. Originally designated by the former Soviet Union, 11 October 1976. Ramsar site no. 104. Most recent RIS information: 2003.
**Muraka**  
Site number: 909 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Ida-Viru County  
Area: 13,980 ha | Coordinates: 59°08'36"N 27°07'30"E | Designation dates: 05-06-1997  
View Site details in RSIS

This wetland complex in the north-east of Estonia consists of raised bogs, swamp forests, fens, primeval forests, bog-pools and ephemeral streams. It is located in the catchment areas of the Tagajõgi, Pungerja, and Purtsse rivers, and is especially important for the maintenance of their hydrological regimes. Its biodiversity is one of the richest in Estonian mires, and some species found in the wetland such as the ghost orchid (*Epipogium aphyllum*) and the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) are rarely seen in other parts of the country. It is also one of the few breeding places for the jack snipe (*Lymnocryptes minimus*). Nationally threatened species can also be found, including the southern dunlin (*Calidris alpina schinzii*) and willow grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*). Pollution from nearby power stations has been reduced but still poses a threat to the wetland, along with intensifying forestry and increasing pressures from tourism.

**Nigula**  
Site number: 910 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Pärnu  
Area: 6,430.9 ha | Coordinates: 58°00'43"N 24°40'26"E | Designation dates: 05-06-1997  
View Site details in RSIS

Situated adjacent to the border with Latvia, Nigula is comprised of mires, forests, and a peatland area which covers 37% of the total area of the wetland. Active raised bogs, transition mires, quaking bogs, bog woodland and 370 bog pools of different sizes are among the rare and protected habitats found in the Site. These play a substantial hydrological and biological role in the region, and support several endangered plant and animal species, such as the fern *Botrychium virginianum*, the Siberian flying squirrel (*Pteromys Volans*) and the lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*). The wetland is important for birds, hosting more than 30,000 individuals annually, mainly geese, cranes and swans. Animal species with large habitat requirements, such as brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), moose (*Alces alces*), Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) and Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) use the Site as a refuge. As of 2020, a restoration plan is in place, which is designed to restore wooded pastures around the peatland area.

**Puhto-Laelatu-Nehatu Wetland Complex**  
Site number: 911 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Läänemaa  
Area: 4,640 ha | Coordinates: 58°34'N 23°33'E | Designation dates: 05-06-1997  
View Site details in RSIS

Puhto-Laelatu-Nehatu Wetland Complex. 17/06/97; Läänemaa County; 4,640 ha; 58°34'N 023°33'E. Nature Reserve, Botanical-Zoological Reserve, IBA. A wetland consisting of a chain of lagoons, and a mire with shallow lakes and bogs, bordered by species-rich alvar, wooded meadow, and forest communities. The coastal area is a stopover for internationally important numbers of migrating waterfowl and provides roosting areas for geese and common crane. Human activities include scientific research, fishing, sheep and cattle grazing, agriculture, forestry, and limited tourism. Nutrient-enrichment is problematic. Ramsar site no. 911. Most recent RIS information: 1997.
Sookuninga
Site number: 1,748 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Pärnu County
Area: 5,869 ha | Coordinates: 58°00'14"N 24°49'31"E | Designation dates: 27-12-2007
View Site details in RSIS

Sookuninga covers the central part of the North Livonian transboundary wetland complex, which also comprises the Nigula and Ziemelu Purvi wetlands in Latvia. It is situated near the western end of the border with Latvia, and comprises six large raised bogs, hummock and hollow complexes, and numerous pools. The bogs found in the Site are among the oldest and largest in the region and play an important role in regulating groundwater discharge and maintaining the water levels of the area. Several important rivers have their sources here, including the Reiu, Rannametsa and Ura. Several rare and endangered bird species use the wetland for breeding and as a stopover in their migration, such as black stork (*Ciconia nigra*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), lesser-spotted eagle (*Clanga pomarina*), great-spotted eagle (*Clanga clanga*) and willow grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*). Due to its remote location, the area is sparsely inhabited, and the main uses are tied to forestry, berry and mushroom picking, and small-scale hunting, all at comparatively low intensities.

Soomaa
Site number: 912 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Pärnu, Viljandi Counties
View Site details in RSIS

Soomaa is an extensive area comprising four large bog complexes separated by rivers, floodplain meadows and alluvial forests, and surrounded by swamp and carrs. The area is the most important wetland in the south-west of Estonia: it supports high biodiversity values, contains one of the two best preserved bogs in Estonia and has a very significant role in regulating the groundwater levels of the region. The wetland also provides nesting and stopover grounds to several nationally threatened species, such as the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), and hosts an internationally important number of Bewick’s swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*). Overgrowth of scrub in floodplain meadows and the impacts of logging and increasing tourism are among the main threats to the wetland. A visitor’s centre maintains ten different educational trails equipped with viewing towers, platforms and boardwalks. As of 2020, a management plan is in place, which includes restoration and amelioration activities.

Vilsandi National Park
Site number: 913 | Country: Estonia | Administrative region: Saare County, Saaremaa Island
Area: 24,100 ha | Coordinates: 58°22'59"N 21°54'E | Designation dates: 05-06-1997
View Site details in RSIS

Vilsandi National Park. 17/06/97; Saare County, Saaremaa Island; 24,100 ha; 58°23'N 021°54'E. National Park, IBA. A large wilderness area comprised of a varied coastal landscape, archipelago, and brackish and freshwater relict lakes. Predominant vegetation consists of coastal meadows and includes, reedbeds, forests, and cropland. One third of the plant species present are rare for Estonia and include numerous endangered and vulnerable plants. Internationally important numbers of 249 species of waterbirds use the site for breeding, staging and wintering. Numerous species of mammals are present. Human activities include small-scale recreation and tourism, farming, forestry, and fishing. Ramsar site no. 913. Most recent RIS information: 1997.