



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Kazakhstan

10 Ramsar Site(s) covering 3,188,557 ha

### Alakol-Sasykkol Lakes System

Site number: 1,892 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Almaty Oblast and East Kazakhstan Oblast

Area: 914,663 ha | Coordinates: 46°16'N 81°31'59"E | Designation dates: 25-11-2009

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Alakol-Sasykkol Lakes System. 25/11/09; Almaty, East Kazakhstan Oblasts; 914,663 ha; 46°16'N 081°32'E. State Nature Reserve. The Lakes System is Kazakhstan's largest reserve for nesting wetland birds and a major migratory stop, with over a hundred thousand waterbirds and semi-aquatic birds stopping annually. The system, located in an ancient tectonic depression, comprises 529 river-fed lakes, ranging from saline to fresh water, providing highly diverse habitat for 342 bird species, including 11 internationally threatened species, 203 nesting bird species, and appreciable numbers of moulting waterfowl during summer. Humid, desert, lowland, and mountainous types of habitats are located in very close proximity, and the site is characterized broadly as having five vegetation types: desert, meadow, forest, submerged aquatic, and shrubs. Overlaying significant groundwater resources, the Lakes System also hosts a large variety of endemic and relict plant and fish species, as well as two internationally Vulnerable mammal species (*Vormela peregusna* and *Gazella subgutturosa*). The three largest lakes are important fisheries, with annual assessment of optimum catch quotas. The lakes attract many visitors during the summer months, and a viewing tower and visitor centre are planned for construction. The lakes' ecological character is affected by illegal hunting and fishing, uncontrolled water extraction, cattle grazing, recreation, and fires. A management plan has been developed. Ramsar site no. 1892. Most recent RIS information: 2009.

### Ili River Delta and South Lake Balkhash

Site number: 2,020 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Almaty Oblast

Area: 976,630.3 ha | Coordinates: 45°35'52"N 74°44'17"E | Designation dates: 01-01-2012

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The wetland is situated in Southern Kazakhstan, in the northern part of three districts: Balkhash, Karataly and Aksu. The Ili River Delta is the largest remaining natural delta on an inland lake in Central Asia. It supports 10 inland wetland types including permanent inland delta; freshwater lake; rivers, streams or creeks; and seasonal or intermittent freshwater lakes. The wetland provides a rich variety of desert flora (427 species) and fauna (345 species) and supports a range of threatened species, including 25 bird, 1 fish and 3 mammal species. Important threatened species include the Goitered Gazelle, Marbeled Polecat, White-headed Duck, Red-breasted Goose and Ship Sturgeon. More than 70,000 birds have been counted at the site, including greater than 1% of the global population of 8 bird species, such as the Dalmatian Pelican. Balkash Lake and the Ili River Delta are important fishery water bodies and the floodplains in the area are the most productive haying lands and good pastures. The wetland is being threatened by a 30% reduction in the water inflow due to the construction of the Kapchagai hydroelectric station and creation of the Akdaly irrigation unit. The wetland area is managed under the authority of the Altyn-Emel State National Nature Park.

## Koibagar-Tyuntyugur Lake System

Site number: 1,862 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Kostanay Region

Area: 58,000 ha | Coordinates: 52°39'N 65°45'E | Designation dates: 07-05-2009

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Koibagar-Tyuntyugur Lake System. 07/05/2009; Kostanay oblast; 58,000 ha; 52°39' N 065°45' E. Comprising five river-fed, freshwater lakes in northern Kazakhstan, characterized by a diversity of habitats including extensive shoreline reedbeds, open water and seasonal floodplain wet meadows. The lake system is of great importance for Anseriformes during all periods; up to 200,000 moulting individuals have been recorded during favourable conditions, and as many as 500,000 waterbirds during the period of autumn passage. The site supports 13 bird species on the IUCN Red List, including the Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) and Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*), and over 1% of the populations of 12 waterbird species. The area surrounding the lakes is used for agriculture, including grain cropping and animal husbandry. Koibagar and Tyuntyugur lakes are used for commercial fishing, and associated boating activities cause disturbance to bird nesting and migration. Goose hunting, vegetation trampling, and fires also pose threats to the ecological character of the site. The site is designated in the Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and Other Globally Endangered Wetland Bird Species in the framework of the Convention on Migratory Species. RIS site information was developed with the assistance of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project. Ramsar site no. 1862. Most recent RIS information: 2009.

## Kourgaldzhin and Tengiz Lakes

Site number: 107 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Akmola Oblast

Area: 260,500 ha | Coordinates: 50°25'N 69°15'E | Designation dates: 11-10-1976

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Tengiz-Korgalzhyn Lake System. 11/10/76; Akmola Oblast; 353,341 ha; 50°25'N 069°15'E. Nature Reserve. Korgalzhyn and Tengiz Lakes are representative examples of a shallow lake system with a mix of fresh, salty and brackish water bodies characteristic for the north of Kazakhstan, situated in a steppe landscape with little relief and grass oceans covering the land to the horizon. Reed beds scattered on islands by the heavy ice load of the winter leave channels and lakes open. The Tengiz-Korgalzhyn lakes have been a strict nature reserve since 1968, but the adjacent lake systems of the Tengiz lake basin are not strictly protected and will be added as clusters to this nomination at a later stage. An enormous number of birds stop over in the region - on the mud islands on lake Tengiz the northernmost colony of Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*, the symbol of the Korgalzhyn Nature Reserve) reaches up to 14,000 breeding pairs. The Korgalzhyn Lakes harbor big colonies of the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelicanus crispus*) with over 500 breeding pairs nesting in the vast reed beds (10% of the world population). The White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) is breeding and resting at the fresh and brackish lakes; in autumn it can be observed in numbers of up to 4,000 birds (30-40% of the world population) in the protected area. A management plan is under development under a GEF/UNDP project. There is an associated nature museum and visitors' centre which attracts groups from the new capital, Astana, but only scientific tourism and research is permitted and tourism within the Reserve itself, as opposed to in the buffer zone, is not expected to increase. Ramsar site no. 107 (originally designated by the former Soviet Union). Most recent RIS information: 2006.

## Kulykol-Taldykol Lake System

Site number: 1,863 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Kostanay Region

Area: 8,300 ha | Coordinates: 51°22'59"N 61°52'E | Designation dates: 07-05-2009

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Kulykol-Taldykol Lake System. 07/05/2009; Kostanay oblast; 8,300 ha; 51°23' N 061°52' E. A wetland complex in northern Kazakhstan comprising two large lakes, Kulykol and Taldykol, and several smaller lakes. The complex is highly significant for waterbirds. It is habitat for 12 bird species on the IUCN Red List, including the Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*), and supports tens of thousands of Anseriformes during migration and moulting, as well as over 1% of the populations of 12 species of waterbird. 45 species of wetland birds are reported to nest at the site. The lake system has a range of habitats including open water, damp meadows and shoreline reedbeds. Lake depth and salinity fluctuate seasonally. The site is surrounded by agricultural land including grain crops attractive to large numbers of geese and is used for hunting and small-scale fishing by local residents. The site is included in the Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and Other Globally Endangered Wetland Bird Species. RIS site information was developed with the assistance of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project. Ramsar site no. 1863. Most recent RIS information: 2009.

## Lakes of the lower Turgay and Irgiz

Site number: 108 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Aktyubinsk district

Area: 348,000 ha | Coordinates: 48°42'N 62°10'59"E | Designation dates: 11-10-1976

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The lakes are situated in the Aktyubinsk district, northeast of the Aral Sea near the town of Kouilis in the north of Kazakhstan.

## Lesser Aral Sea and Delta of the Syrdarya River

Site number: 2,083 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Aral district

Area: 330,000 ha | Coordinates: 46°20'49"N 61°00'09"E | Designation dates: 02-02-2012

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Lesser Aral Sea and Delta of the Syrdarya River. 02/02/2012; Kyzylorda Oblast; 330,000 ha; 46°20' 50N 061°00' 09E. Includes Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The site covers the eastern part of the Lesser Aral Sea, including Saryshyganak Bay and the mouth of the Syrdarya River, with a number of lakes at the northeastern end of the Aral Depression. In spite of the ecological catastrophe of the shrinking of the Aral Sea in the 1960s, the area remains an important habitat for birds and other animals of the water-marsh complex. It is a feeding, breeding ground, and migration path for fish such as the critically endangered Fringebarbel Sturgeon and the Syrdarian Shovelnose Sturgeon, and there is a high level of fish endemism in the Syrdarya River Basin and Aral Sea. Mass nesting of birds such as the Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) and the Black Winged-silt (*Himantopus himantopus*) occur, and more than 200,000 waterbirds migrate through the site in autumn. This large wetland feeds the subsoil waters of the large arid region and is critically important for local people as it is one of their only sources of subsistence. Thanks to ongoing government efforts, the water level in the Lesser Aral has been rising with a relative revival of fisheries and agricultural activities. Ramsar Site no. 2083. Most recent RIS information: 2012.

## Naurzum Lake System

Site number: 1,872 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Kostanay Region  
Area: 139,714 ha | Coordinates: 51°29'07"N 64°17'51"E | Designation dates: 12-07-2009  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Naurzum Lake System. 12/07/09; Kostanay Oblast; 139,714 ha; 51°32'N 064°26'E. World Heritage Site (as part of the Saryarka - Steppe and Lakes of Northern Kazakhstan). A system of approximately 26 lakes in northern Kazakhstan and a near natural example of an Asian steppes-region wetland with outstanding importance for birds. The Lakes' cyclic hydrologic regime provides seasonal and annual diversity of fresh to saline habitats, including for the Critically Endangered Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) and 23 other threatened species, notably significant percentages of Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) and Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) populations. It is a site of mass moulting for ducks and swans, nesting for 158 species, and an important stop for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. It regularly supports more than 1% of 20 species of waterbirds. Flooding on average every 12-15 years, the Lake System is important for sustaining groundwater levels in the region. There is a management plan for the site, and it lies within a protected zone with limited access except for scientific research. Naurzum Reserve is included in the West/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds, under the Bonn Convention. Ramsar site no. 1872. Most recent RIS information: 2009.

## Ural River Delta and adjacent Caspian Sea coast

Site number: 1,856 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Atyrau oblast  
Area: 111,500 ha | Coordinates: 46°58'N 51°45'E | Designation dates: 10-03-2009  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Ural River Delta and adjacent Caspian Sea coast. 10/03/09; Atyrau oblast; 111,500 ha; 46 58'N 51 45'E. Part of North Caspian Nature Reserve. A unique river delta wetland in western Kazakhstan along the northern shore of the Caspian Sea, comprising a large variety of marine/coastal and inland wetland types. Due to its mixed water supply and seasonal variation, the site has a range of marine and freshwater habitats and supports considerable numbers and diversity of species, notably 13 IUCN threatened bird species. The site is significant for large numbers of nesting, moulting and migratory species, among them appreciable numbers of Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) (22,000), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) (12,000) and Teal (*Anas querquedula*) (44,000). The Ural River is significant as a spawning ground for a number of Caspian Sea sturgeon fish species. The site supports more than 460 species of vertebrate animals, including 76 species of fish, 20 species of reptile, 292 bird species and 48 species of mammals. The site is important for transport, and also supports farming activities (pasture, cropping) and tourism. Intensive fishing, navigation and exploration all pose threats to the ecological character of the wetland. A management plan has been prepared for the site. Ramsar site no. 1856. Most recent RIS information: 2009.

## Zharsor-Urkash Lake System

Site number: 1,873 | Country: Kazakhstan | Administrative region: Kostanay Region  
Area: 41,250 ha | Coordinates: 51°18'59"N 62°43'59"E | Designation dates: 12-07-2009  
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Zharsor-Urkash Lake System. 12/07/09; Kostanay Oblast; 41,250 ha; 51°22'N 062°48'E. A system of approximately 14 lakes characteristic of the arid steppe province in northern Kazakhstan. Consisting of both saline and freshwater permanent or intermittent lakes and wet marsh habitat, the site is a regular stopping site of the Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) and habitat for 16 threatened bird species. It supports appreciable numbers of White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) and Common Crane (*Grus grus*), as well as Little Stints (*Calidris minuta*) and Curlew Sandpipers (*C. ferruginea*) along shorelines. It is an important migratory stopover for a large number of waterbirds dominated by Anseriformes and Limicolae and nesting habitat for 79 species. Mammals are represented by 27 species, including the Critically Endangered Saiga Antelope (*Saiga tatarica*). Land use at the site includes hayfields, pasture, small-scale salt production, and limited hunting. Steppe fires are a threat to the ecological character of the lakes. The site is included in the West/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds, under the Bonn Convention. Ramsar site no. 1873. Most recent RIS information: 2009.