

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) – 2009-2014 version

«VYGONOSHCHANSKOE»

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Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes 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. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 17, 4th edition).
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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

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2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

16 January 2013

3. Country:

Republic of Belarus

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The precise name of the designated site in one of the three official languages (English, French or Spanish) of the Convention. Alternative names, including in local language(s), should be given in parentheses after the precise name.

«Vygonoshchanskoe»

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for (tick one box only):

a) Designation of a NEW Ramsar site ; or

b) Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area

The Ramsar site boundary and site area are unchanged:

or

If the site boundary has changed:

- i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ; or
- ii) the boundary has been extended ; or
- iii) the boundary has been restricted**

and/or

If the site area has changed:

- i) the area has been measured more accurately or
- ii) the area has been extended ; or
- iii) the area has been reduced**

** **Important note:** If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site:

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

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

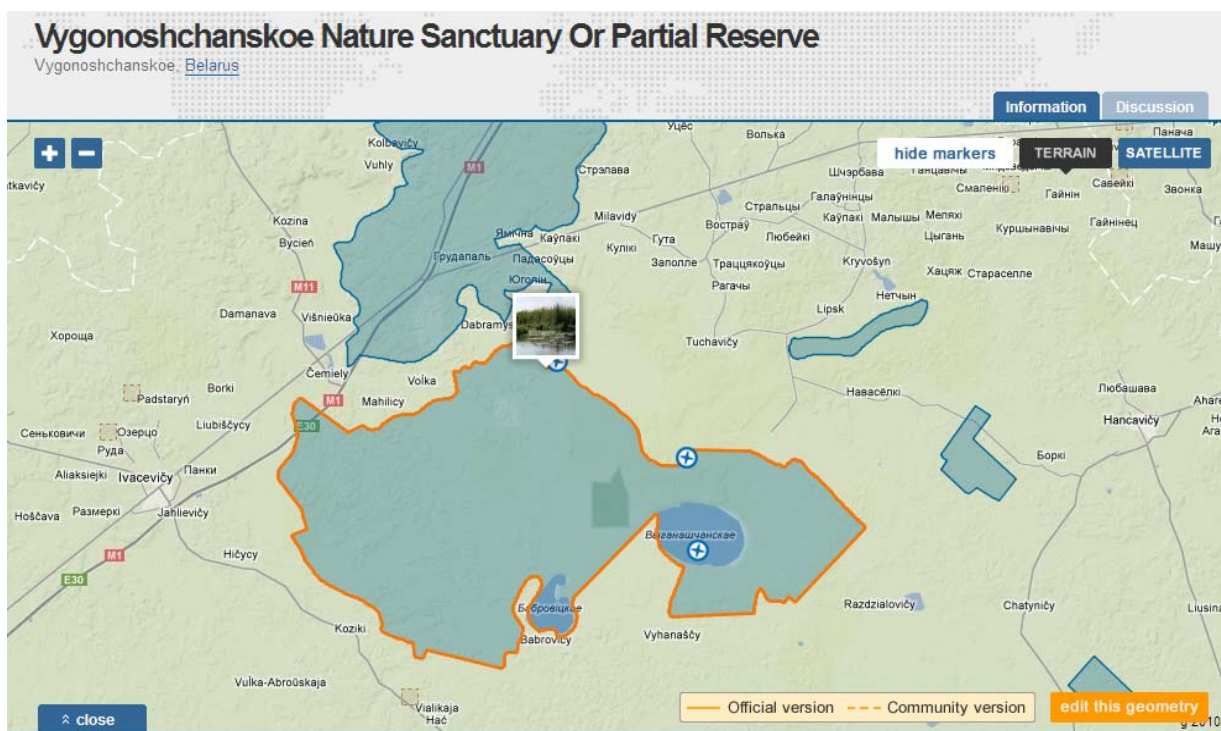
- i) a hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): ;
- ii) an electronic format (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) ;
- iii) a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables .

b) Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park, etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The boundary and area of the Ramsar site (54 182,4 ha) slightly differs from the boundaries of the existing National Landscape Reserve «Vygonoshchanskoe» (55047,4 ha). The Ramsar site is the largest peatland mostly covered with waterlogged alder forests. There are two large lakes on the territory as well as rivers floodplains and open marsh areas.

On the north the Ramsar site boundaries adjoin the floodplain of the River Shchara. On the east, south and west the boundaries of the Ramsar site coincide with the boundaries of the existing National Landscape Reserve, and to the west the boundary runs along the elevated sand dune.



8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

The central coordinates of the Ramsar Site's are: 52°42' N 25°40' E.

9. General location:

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

The Ramsar Site is situated in Ivatsevichi, Lyachovichy and Gantsevichi districts of the Brest Region, 175 km south-west to Minsk, and 160 km north-east to Brest. The nearest large town Ivatsevichi (about 22.9 thousand inhabitants) is 10 km to the east from the potential Ramsar site.

10. Elevation:(in metres: average and/or maximum& minimum)

From 151 to 160 meters above the sea level.

11. Area:(in hectares): 54 182,4ha

12. General overview of the site:

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

The potential Ramsar wetland is being established on the basis of the National Landscape Reserve "Vygonoshchanskoe", the largest forest-wetland complex situated at the watershed of rivers' basins of the Black and Baltic seas. This unique area just slightly transformed by economic and recreational activities is of great importance for the conservation of individual plant and animal species as well as for the protection of the whole natural complex of Belarusian Polessie.

The potential Ramsar wetland includes waterlogged forests, fens, transitional and raised bogs, floodplain meadows, lakes, rivers and canals. The core of the Site is Lake Vygonoshchanskoe, one of the largest eutrophic lakes of residual type in Polessie, which preserved in practically natural state.

The territory of the potential Ramsar Site is an Important Bird Area of international importance (criteria A1, B2, B3). In addition, the Wetland is a habitat for 52 animal species and 13 plant species from the Red List of the Republic of Belarus.

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Tick the box under 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). All Criteria which apply should be ticked.

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 8 • 9

14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

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).

Criterion 1

This is one of the largest tracts of forest peatlands (waterlogged alder forests) in Europe preserved in natural state. It is the benchmark of forest peatlands in Europe. The potential Ramsar Site also includes large areas of open peatlands (fen mires, transitional swamps and raised bogs), lakes and rivers floodplains.

The Wetland maintains the populations of some vulnerable and endangered species: 8 pairs of Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (**CR**); about 30-100 males of Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (**CR**), more than 30 males of Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (**EN**).

Criterion 2:

The Wetland is a habitat for 52 animal species and 13 plant species listed in the Red List of the Republic of Belarus, many of them also have European importance. For details please see point 22. There are two plant species listed under Annex 1 of the Bern Convention: Water wheel Plant *Aldrovanda vesiculosa* and Pasqueflower *Pulsatilla patens*.

The wetland supports the existence of fragile ecosystems - peatlands of different types (open fens, raised bogs, forest fen mires).

Criterion 3

The potential Ramsar Site supports animal and plant populations important for maintenance of the biological diversity of Polessie bio-geographical region. 13 plant species and 52 animal species from the Belarussian Red List were revealed on the territory. Moreover, the local populations of the Great Grey Owl, Black Stork and Greater Spotted Eagle are among largest in the country.

Territory of the potential Ramsar site is important for maintenance of regional Elk population at critical stages of the life cycle. There is one of the most stable and largest populations of European Pond Turtle *Emys orbicularis* in the Polessie region and in the whole country on the territory of the potential Ramsar Site.

15. 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) bio-geographical region:

International: Continental

National: Polessie

b) bio-geographical region:

International: Biogeographical Regions Europe, European Environment Agency, 2005

National: There are three bio-geographical provinces in Belarus: Belarusian Poozerie, Belarusian Elevation and Polessie Lowland (Dementiev, 1959)

16. 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.

Geology and geomorphology

According to geomorphologic zoning this entire territory is located within the Pripjat water-glacial and alluvial plain with large swamps, numerous continental dunes, islands of terminal moraines and kames. The overall monotonous relief is disrupted by extensively developed eolian forms. Sandy sediments, exposed to wind erosion in the Late Valdai ice period and Holocene, form numerous areas of ridged and hilly dune relief with relative heights of 2-5 m. Most of the dunes, many of which are of parabolic shape, are concentrated near the lakes and along the rivers. The ancient waterside formations - small ridges and walls – rise along the edges of swamps.

Among the modern (Holocene) relief-forming processes the most important are peat accumulation and eolian activity.

The majority of peat deposit on most of the Wetland is underlain by sapropel; a thin layer of marl is often at the very bottom. The sapropels are covered with a heavy layer of sedge-hypnum peat (about 2 m), followed by a thin layer of sedge-sphagnum transition peat. The next is a thin layer of pine-cotton grass peat, rolling in a modern pine-sphagnum peat with cotton grass. Areas of the lowland deposits adjacent to the banks of original lake, are characterized by the following deposit pattern: the hypnum peat of about 0.5 m deep is on the bottom, higher it is followed by woody-reed layer of 1.5 - 2.0 m deep; at depth of 0.5 - 0.25 m from the daylight surface it is replaced by the birch-sedge layer.

Hydrography and hydrology

The hydrographical network of the Reserve is represented by Lakes Vygonoshchanskoe and Bobrovichskoe, the River Shchara, the Oginski Canal and numerous canals that are part of the Pripjat hydrological area.

Lakes Vygonoshchanskoe and Bobrovichskoe are among the largest in Polessie and represent the "remnant" of a once-existing vast water body that covered an area of 500 km² and was located at the watershed of the Neman and Pripjat basins.

The area of Lake Vygonoshchanskoe is 2596 ha. The maximum depth to the surface of bottom sediments is 2.7 m, the average one – 0.8m. In the western and southwestern parts, there are many shoals barely covered with water. The banks are low, swampy, and difficult to pass. Along the most part of the shoreline there are coastal floating mats with average width of 1.5 – 2.0 m, in some areas it reaches 15-40 m. Small floating islands with area from one to several hundreds square meters are scattered over the whole water area. The mineral bottom, composed of fine sand is covered with modern sediments - sapropels, peat and silt. The average deposit thickness is 1.8 m.

Lake Vygonoshchanskoe is connected with the Rivers Shchara and Yaselda through the Oginski Canal built in 1767-1783 by Michal Kazimier Oginski, Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania - the famous composer's Uncle. It was the first Belarusian navigation canal connecting the waterways

from the Baltic to the Black Sea and used to transport goods, mostly wood. Its total length is about 50 km; its length within the territory of potential Ramsar Site is 7.5 km. No longer being a hydrotechnical structure, the Canal became a historical monument.

The hydrological regime of Lake Vygonoshchanskoe depends on amount of precipitation and flood water inflow from the small tributaries. These waters are discharged through the sluice of the Oginski Canal into Shchara River, and in former times when the Canal was not blocked off – along this canal into the Yaselda River.

The water surface area of Bobrovichskoe, the second lake on the territory, is 947 ha. Its maximum depth is 8 m, and the average one is 2.5 m. The length of the lake is 4.9 km, its width – 3.3 km, and the length of the shoreline is 14.4 km. Water volume in the Lake is 25 million m³.

Along the northern border of the potential Ramsar site flows the River Shchara, a left tributary of the Neman. The floodplain of the River is low, swampy and hummocky, crossed by numerous melioration canals. During spring flood the water runs through these canals (as well as through the Oginski Canal) from the Shchara to Lake Vygonoshchanskoe. The width of flooding zone of the Shchara is from 200 to 3000 m. The spring flood period starts in early March and lasts 65-80 days; it is complicated by irregularity of precipitation and snow melting. The average excess of the highest water level over the summer - autumn mean is 1.8 m. The river bed is meandering almost along its whole length, and is 15-20 m (in some places up to 60 m) wide. The banks are low, mostly swampy.

In addition to the Oginski Canal the hydrological network of the territory is represented by a dense network of melioration canals directly connected with the Shchara as well as with the Grivda, a left tributary of the Shchara.

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

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

Almost all the adjacent areas have the same relative heights as the potential Ramsar site's territory because they also were fen mires before the melioration. There are melioration systems used in agriculture around the potential Ramsar site. Only on the west the bog borders with forest lands located on the mosaic relief (waterlogged lowlands alternating with sand dunes).

The climate is moderately continental forming under the influence of the Atlantic masses with mild and damp winters and relatively cool and sunny summers.

Western and north-western winds are predominant.

18. Hydrological values:

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

The potential Ramsar Site "Vygonoshchanskoe" is one of the largest forest-wetland complexes in Europe, preserved in the natural state. The wetlands occupy more than 90% of the territory.

The wetland plays a key role in not only maintaining the hydrological regime in the region but also in feeding the River Shchara, one of the Neman's largest tributaries.

The wetland has certain regional climate-forming significance for the Region mitigating fluctuations in temperature and humidity.

19. 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 • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp • Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 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.

Xp, U, Xf, Ts, O, Tp, P, N, M, 4, 9

For further details please see point 20.

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

The described territory is a large forest-and-wetland complex, preserved in the natural state and representing the native landscapes of Belarusian Polesie.

Despite the overall monotonous relief, the alternation of waterlogged lowlands, flat meadows and mineral islands creates the mosaic soil-hydrological conditions which result in quite diverse and mosaic vegetation cover. Lakes Vygonoshchanskoe and Bobrovichskoe as well as open swamps, old-age oak forests on the mineral islands benefit to the peculiarity and uniqueness of this natural body.

Forest wetlands dominate covering 69,1% of the territory. Swamps mostly open or sparsely overgrown with birch and pine trees occupy 20, 5% of the Site. Floodplain meadows cover 4.5%, these are situated mainly in the River Shchara floodplain, and are heavily waterlogged and in some places overgrown with shrubs. The water bodies (Lakes Vygonoshchanskoe and Bobrovichskoe, rivers and canals) amount 5.0% of the territory. Ruderal lands (arable lands, roads, human settlements) occupy less than 1.0% of the Site area.

According to the forest typology the forests of the potential Ramsar site are diverse: there are 74 forest types of 10 forest formations. The native forest types make up 89.5% of the total forest area: these are all oak and spruce forests, all types of pine forests except the sorrel (oxalis) and part of brake fern ones, downy birch trees on the transition bogs and black alder forests on fen mires. The derivative communities of silver birch, aspen and hornbeam forests occupy the rest of the territory.

Birch forests (69.6%), pine forests (16.0%) and black alder forests (11.2%) prevail in the forest structure. The other forest formations (spruce, oak, ash, aspen and osier forests) account for about 3%.

Forests with excessive moisture account 33,669.9 ha or 90.2% of the Site's total forest area. In total wetlands including bogs, floodplain meadows, lakes, rivers, canals occupy 91.8% of the potential Ramsar Site.

Riparian and aquatic vegetation cover the large part of the water body, the following plant species are prevailing: Reed, Cattail, Water Soldier (*Stratiotes aloides* L.), Water Lily, Spatter-dock. Sedges, Majanthenum, Bur-reed (*Sparganium*), Wild Rice (*Zizania aquatica*) grow on the coastal floating mats.

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. 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.*

The difficult access to the hardly waterlogged communities contributes to the conservation of the unique and just slightly disturbed complex of forest-wetland ecosystems with scattered mineral islands. 15 categories of especially valuable plant communities were distinguished with the total area of 26665 ha (11086 ha of which is a large complex of open fen mires). 12 habitat types protected under the Habitat Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, O.J. L206, 22.07.92.1992) were allocated at the territory of Wetland. The following habitat types are the most important from them: natural transition mire (code 7140, area – 6725.8 ha), wet broad-leaved forest on watershed (code 9080, area 3138.4 ha), wet coniferous forest and small-leaved forests on mires and transition mires, on peat humus - gley soil along wetlands, forest rivers and streams (code 91DO, area 3793.7 ha), dystrophic lakes with vegetation *Utricularietea intermedio-minoris* class (code 3160, area 4157 ha).

547 species of vascular plants were revealed on the territory of the wetland "Vygonoshchanskoe": 3 species of Lycopodiophyta, 6 Equisetopsida species, 8 - Pteridophyta, 3 - Gymnospermae, and 527 species of Angiosperms.

14 species of protected plant species are among the flora of the Site: Coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* (syn. *Dentaria bulbifera*) (NT), Bear Leek/Wild Garlic *Allium ursinum* (VU), Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* (VU), Turk's Cap Lily *Lilium martagon* (NT), Wood Fescue *Festuca altissima* (NT), Slender Waternymph *Najas major* (VU), Brittle Waternymph *Caulinia minor* (EN), Slender Cottongrass *Eriophorum gracile* (VU), Lousewort Moor King *Pedicularis sceptrum-carolinum* (EN), White Adder's Mouth *Malaxis monophyllos* (EN), Waterwheel Plant *Aldrovanda vesiculosa*,* (EN), Neottianthe *Neottianthe cucullata* (EN), Lesser Twayblade *Listera cordata* (EN), Pasqueflower *Pulsatilla patens** (NT).

* Species also listed in Annex 1 of the Bern Convention.

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14. 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.*

Terrestrial vertebrates include 9 Amphibia species, 5 reptiles, 184 bird species and 36 mammal species. Seven mammal species are entered in Belarus Red List: Pond Bat *Myotis dasycneme* (EN), Lesser Noctule or Leisler's Bat *Nyctalus leisleri* (VU), Northern Bat *Eptesicus nilssonii* (VU), Edible Dormouse *Myoxus glis* (VU), Hazel or Common Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* (NT), European Lynx *Lynx lynx** (EN, *Annex 3, Berne Convention), European Badger *Meles meles** (VU).

There are 34 protected bird species in the avifauna of the Site, among them are: Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica** (EN), Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris** (VU), Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus** (EN), Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax** (NT), Great White Egret *Egretta alba** (VU), Black Stork *Ciconia nigra** (VU), Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (CR), Osprey *Pandion haliaetus** (EN), Black Kite *Milvus migrans** (VU), White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla** (EN), Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus**(EN), Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* *(VU), Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina** (VU),

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus** (CR), Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus** (VU), Hobby *Falco subbuteo** (NT), Little Crane *Porzana parva** (NT), Corncrake *Crex crex** (VU), Gray Crane *Grus grus** (VU), Great Snipe *Gallinago media** (EN), Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (VU), Curlew *Numenius arquata* (VU), Common Gull *Larus canus* (NT), Eurasian Eagle-owl *Bubo bubo** (EN), Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum** (NT), Great Grey Owl *Strix nebulosa** (EN), Ural Owl *Strix uralensis** (VU), Short-eared Owl *Asio flammens** (NT), White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* (LR), Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus* (LR), Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* (VU), Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis** (VU), Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (EN), Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (VU), Azure Tit *Parus cyanus** (*VU, Annex 2, Berne Convention).

Besides, fauna of the territory includes other species from the Red List of Belarus: 2 reptile species (European pond turtle *Emys orbicularis* (VU) and Grass Snake *Coronella austriaca* (VU), both protected also under the Berne Convention, Annex 2) and 11 invertebrate species (Green Hawker *Aeshna viridis* (VU) (Odonata), also protected under Berne Convention, Annex 2; Violet Ground Beetle *Carabus violaceus* (NT), Shagreen Ground Beetle *C. coriaceus* (NT), Lucid Ground Beetle *C. nitens* (VU), Menetries's Ground Beetle *C. menemriesi* (VU), Cancellous Ground Beetle *C. cancellatus* (NT) (Coleoptera), Moorland Clouded Yellow *Colias palaeno* (VU), False Ringlet *Coenonympha oedippus* (VU) (Lepidoptera), Moss Bumblebee *Bombus muscorum* (VU), Medicinal Leech *Hirudo medicinalis* (VU) (Berne Convention, Annex 2), Great Raft Spider *Dolomedes platarius* (VU)).

The international environmental importance of any territory is defined by the presence of species protected under international conventions. Several bird species from the IUCN Red List (IUCN, 2001) regularly breed on the territory: Corncrake (50 pairs) (LC), Great Snipe (20-30 pairs), Greater Spotted Eagle (8 pairs), Aquatic Warbler (30-100 males), White-tailed Eagle (7 pairs). Ferruginous Duck had been recorded here on breeding before the 1990-s. In total 26 animal species with the IUCN protection status (Annex 1) are recorded on the potential Ramsar wetland.

23. Social and cultural values:

a) Describe if the site has any general social and/or 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:

The main cultural and historical attraction of the potential Ramsar wetland is the Oginski Canal, running through its central part. The Canal was built in 1767-1783 by Michal Kazimier Oginski, Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania - the famous composer's Uncle. It was the first Belarusian navigation canal connecting the waterways from the Baltic to the Black Sea and used to transport goods, mostly wood. No longer being a hydrotechnical structure, the Canal became a historical monument.

On the territory of the Wetland there are insufficiently studied settlements of early humans from the Neolithic Period, and ancient remains of towns dated by V c. BC - XVII c. AD.

The First World War fortification constructions along the Oginski Canal are of great interest. This is the most preserved defense zone of that historical period in our Country.

The exploitation of the Wetland's natural resources by the local population is connected with timber cutting, berry and mushroom gathering, recreational hunting and fishing. The territory is perspective for development of ecological and local history tourism, historical and educational tours and projects.

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning?

If Yes, tick the box and describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

a) within the Ramsar site:

The owner of the potential Ramsar wetland is the State, and this fact in many respects simplifies and makes easier its management and protection. The economic activities here are operated by Ivatsevichi, Telekhany and Gantsevichi forestries, Vygonoshchany forest and game husbandry, Domanovo hunting ground and three agricultural enterprises.

b) in the surrounding area:

State lands leasable by agricultural producers and forestries.

25. Current land (including water) use:

a) within the Ramsar site:

There are practically no human settlements on the territory; roads run only along the periphery of the Site, and more than 90% of the area is covered with forests and difficult for access. For this reason the main practices of economic activities here are forestry, hunting and fishing. A small part of the territory along the River Shchara is used for mowing and cattle growing.

Due to heavy waterlogging of the territory and low value of its forests, wood cuttings has taken and is taking place mainly along the periphery of the Wetland and on separate ridges accessible in the wintertime of the year. The establishment of the National Reserve led to further restriction of these activities. At present commercially-exploited forests in the Reserve make up only about 5%. On the rest of the territory cuttings of primary use is replaced by more environmentally friendly ways (selective, gradual ones, etc.), all the wood stands refer to first group forests, i.e. the age of their cutting is increased by 10 years. Forestry activities are completely prohibited on separate sites important for conserving biological diversity.

All the Territory is allocated to the tenants of the hunting lands. Hunting is carried out mainly for hoofed animals (elks, deer, and wild boars), game and waterfowl, and is sporting. About one third of the Territory is defined as "a zone of peace", i.e. hunting is prohibited there. The work of gamekeepers and organization of supplemental feeding benefit to maintenance of high numbers of game species.

Vygonoshchanskoe and Bobrovichskoe lakes are used for commercial and recreational fishing. The basis of commercial fishing on Lake Vygonoshchanskoe constitutes one species – Prussian Carp *Carassius auratus gibelio* (on average 76.5% of total catch mass for the last 10 years). Lake Bobrovichskoe is more diverse with relation to recreational fishing. The catches from Lake

Bobrovichskoe are represented by Roach *Rutilus rutilus rutilus*, Bream *Abramis brama*, Rudd *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*, Ide *Leucis cusidus*, Tench *Tinca tinca*, Silver Bream *Blicca bjoerkena*, Common Sazan or Carp *Cyprinus carpio*, Bighead Carp *Aristichthys nobilis*, Grass Carp *Ctenopharyngodon idella*, Pike *Esox lucius*, Perch *Perca fluviatilis*, Ruffe *Gymnocephalus cernuus*, Common Bleak *Alburnus alburnus* and Gudgeon *Gobio gobio*.

26. 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:

The potential Ramsar wetland is heavily waterlogged and in this connection is one of the least exploited areas in Belarus. Within the potential Ramsar site "Vygonoshchanskoe" there are practically no human settlements (except the village Bobrovichi), the road network is presented by temporary forestry roads, built along the highest parts; the central part is practically inaccessible for humans due to high waterlogging. Thus, existing threats relating to economic activities are limited to the periphery of the territory. The most important of them are drainage and cutting of old-age forests along the ridges.

Drainage activities were conducted both within the potential Ramsar wetland and along its periphery. The drainage network within the area was built at the beginning and in the middle of the last Century. A number of polder systems were built along the perimeter of the territory in the 60-80s. These activities resulted in partially disturbance of hydrological regime of the Wetland and consequent succession changes on a considerable part of the natural swamp complex - the overgrowth of open peatlands by birch and osier forests.

The decrease of groundwater table is also the reason of frequent fires that are practically impossible to extinguish due to lack of a road network.

The cutting is a significant threat for old-age native forests on the mineral islands and ridges among the swamps. These are exactly the places where old-age forests preserve, including nemoral oak forests, which are spots of biodiversity concentration, a kind of refuges for rare and protected species.

In the recent years *a change in economic activities on the fen mires and floodplain meadows* has become a certain threat to biological diversity. Termination of mowing leads to overgrowing of open fens with shrubs, birch, and reed, and as a consequence to the disappearance of a number of rare and protected plant and animal species.

Unsustainable hunting and poaching. Overhunting of the Wood Grouse during the spring hunting season is a considerable threat to the population of this species. The increasing number of wild boars in areas of displaying grounds is also a certain threat to the population of the Western subspecies of Wood Grouse. The shooting of Great Grey Owl and other birds of prey is spread for making and selling dummies.

Disruption of the lakes' hydrological regime. By the 1970s Lake Vygonoshchanskoe was a flowing water body. Water from the Shchara flowed through the lake along the Oginski Canal to the river Yaselda, which ensured that the Lake was maintained in a highly productive phase with high abundance and diversity of fish and waterbirds. After the Oginski Canal was blocked, the processes of dystrophication in the Lake have started followed by decreasing of numbers and diversity of fish and birds.

Currently the restoration of the Oginski Canal is under consideration. Risk factors could be associated with reconstruction works, construction of buildings, driveways, parking lots, etc. An

increased flow of tourists can lead to increased disturbance of animals, especially during the breeding season. The displaying grounds of the Wood Grouse whose western population is on the verge of extinction in Europe are located in the old-age pine forests adjacent to the Canal. The Eagle Owl, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Great Grey Owl breed in these forests as well.

b) in the surrounding area:

Peat production. Due to a rise in prices for fuel sources for the last years the Government potentially considers plans for peat extraction at territories adjacent to the borders of potential Ramsar site.

27. Conservation measures taken:

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

In particular, if the site is partly or wholly a World Heritage Site and/or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, please give the names of the site under these designations.

The Wetland has the National protection status being a part of the National Landscape Reserve "Vygonoshchnski". The potential Ramsar Site has lesser area than the Reserve, as it doesn't include several least important parts which are planned for peat extraction. The Wetland "Vygonoshchanskoe" is designated as a territory of international significance for birds (Important Bird Area, BirdLife International).

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

Ia ; Ib ; II ; III ; IV ; V ; VI

The wetland "Vygonoshchanskoe" is designated as a territory of international significance for birds (Important Bird Area).

c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?:

A management plan for the National landscape Reserve "Vygonoshchanskoe" is developed and now is under approval (financing at the expense of budgetary resources). It is expected that the management plan will be approved in 2013. The implementation of the management plan is planned during the period from 2014 till 2018.

d) Describe any other current management practices:

- The project on restoration of the hydrological regime of the Wetland "Vygonoshchanskoe" was developed and implemented (a project of the GEF Small Grants Program);
- Biodiversity-friendly forest management is established;
- Places of habitats for Red Book plants and animals are listed and described, and passed under protection of land users.

In 2006 a special management authority - the State Environmental Agency "Landscape Reserve of National Importance «Vygonoshchanskoe»" was established at the Ivatsevichi Executive Committee. Its main objectives are management and implementation of environmental activities and ecotourism development on the territory of the Reserve.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

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

- To approve and to implement a management plan for this protected area together with the Administration of the Reserve.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

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

In the last decade the studies are done in hydrology, flora and fauna, dynamics of vegetation and the main ecosystems. A network of monitoring plots is created, where investigations are implemented within the National integrated monitoring system for ecosystems on the protected areas.

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

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

Environmental education as a form of environmental activities is carried out only with the employees of the Forestry and Hunting Husbandry by the Administration of legal entities involved in nature use on this territory. There are no any published illustrated or popular-scientific editions about the nature of this territory. Information about the Reserve "Vygonoshchanskoe" is more frequent in local newspapers and on the radio, rarely - in national periodicals. The Internet site of the Reserve is absent as well, although such type of informational source is very important for ecotourism development and attraction of foreigners.

The ecological trail is equipped and the observation tower is built; informational materials (guidebooks, brochures, postcards, the Reserve's maps, etc.) are published and distributed.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

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

The potential Ramsar site is popular with local people as a traditional region of fishing, hunting, berry and mushroom collection.

The station of the experimental forestry-hunting enterprise "Vygonoshchanskoe" is situated on the shores of the Vygonoshchanskoe Lake. This station provides high quality hunting services due to long-term experience and wide international relations. Every year Lakes Vygonoshchanskoe and Bobrovichskoe are visited by more than 10 thousand people for recreational fishing. There is a fleet of small-size boats to provide services to hunters and fishermen. Gamekeeper's services are also available. At present bee-keeping is quite developed. There is a hotel accommodating 14 people at Lake Vygonoshchanskoe. About 25 people at one time could be accommodated in summer houses for rent on the shore of Lake Bobrovichskoe.

Considering the Oginski Canal restoration the tourist infrastructure is expected to be enlarged through reconstruction of existing hotel complexes and building new ones as well as development of services provided by local people (agrotourism).

32. Jurisdiction:

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

Brest regional committee of natural resources and environmental protection (Address: 11, Freedom Square, Brest, 224030, Belarus).

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (Address: 10, Kollektornaya Str., Minsk, 220048, Belarus).

National level - Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection: 10, Kollektornaya Str., Minsk, 220048, Belarus.

33. 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 specified Wetland is the National Landscape Reserve "Vygonoshchanskoe", for the sustainable nature management of which the structure is established with the administration at the address: Naberezhnaya str., vil. Vygonoshchi, Ivatsevichi district, Brest Region, Belarus. Telephone: 375 1645 692 32, Fax: + 375 1645 692 32 Sergei V. Gabets, Director

The main supervisory bodies are the Ivatsevichi and Gantsevichi district environmental inspections with 6 people on the staff.

Address: 21, Lenin Str., Ivatsevichi, 225250, Belarus Telephone: +375 1645 245 32, Fax: + 375 1645 237 17, e-mail: oks@brest.by

Address: 5b, Oktyabrskaya Str., Gantsevichi, 225440, Belarus Telephone: +375 1646 241 69, Fax: + 375 1646 241 69, e-mail: oosgnc@brest.by

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

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Animal species with the IUCN protection status recorded on the potential Ramsar wetland

Птицы/Birds				
1.	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	Вертявая камышевка	Aquatic warbler	VU
2.	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	Большой подорлик	Greater spotted eagle	VU
3.	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Белоглазая чернеть	Ferruginous duck	NT
4.	<i>Crex crex</i>	Коростель	Corncrake	NT
5.	<i>Gallinago media</i>	Дупель	Great snipe	NT
6.	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Орлан-белохвост	White-tailed eagle	LC
Млекопитающие/Mammals				
7.	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	Широкоушка европейская	Western barbastelle	VU
8.	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Выдра	Common otter	(E)
9.	<i>Castor fiber</i>	Бобр речной	Eurasian beaver	NT
10.	<i>Glis glis</i>	Соня-полчок	Fat dormouse	LR/nt
11.	<i>Lynx lynx</i>	Рысь	Eurasian lynx	(E)
12.	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Соня орешниковая	Common dormouse	(E)
13.	<i>Myotis dasycneme</i>	Ночница прудовая	Pond bat	VU
14.	<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	Вечерница малая	Lesser noctule	LR/nt
Рептилии/Reptiles				
15.	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>	Болотная черепаха	European pond turtle	(E)
Амфибии/Amphibians				
16.	<i>Bombina bombina</i>	Жерлянка краснобрюхая	European fire-bellied toad	LR/cd
17.	<i>Hyla arborea</i>	Квакша	European common tree frog	(E)
Рыбы/Pisces				
18.	<i>Aspius aspius</i>	Жерех	Asp	DD
19.	<i>Misgurnus fossilis</i>	Вьюн	Weatherfish	LR/nt
Насекомые/Insecta				
20.	<i>Aeshna viridis</i>	Коромысло зеленое		LR/nt
21.	<i>Coenonympha oedippus</i>	Сенница Эдипп		LR/nt
22.	<i>Formica rufa</i>	Рыжий лесной муравей	Red wood ant	LR/nt
23.	<i>Formica uralensis</i>	Черноголовый муравей		LR/nt
24.	<i>Maculinea alcon</i>	Голубянка алькон	Alcon large blue	LR/nt
Пауки/Spiders				
25.	<i>Dolomedes plantarius</i>	Доломедес	Great raft spider	VU
Кольчатые черви/Annelids				
26.	<i>Hirudo medicinalis</i>	Пьявка медицинская	Medicinal leech	E

Citation: IUCN 2002. 2002 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Downloaded on 27 December 2002.

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