

## 2. Lake Burullus

**Geographical Coordinates** 31°30'N 30°50'E

**Area** 46,200ha

**Location** About 27km north of the city of Disuq, on the north coast of Kafr El Sheikh, north-east Egypt.

**Date of Ramsar Designation** 9 September 1988.

**Other International Designations** None.

**National Designations** None.

**Principal Features** A shallow, saline lagoon, about 65km in length, varying in width from 6km to 16km, and containing about 50 islands and islets. Water depth ranges between 0.5m and 1.6m, the eastern part being the shallowest (average depth = 0.8m). The lagoon is separated from the Mediterranean along most of its length by a long sand dune bar, but is connected with the open sea by a narrow channel (about 50m wide) near the village of El Burge, in the east. As a result, there is a strong salinity gradient from east to west, with the western part of the lagoon containing relatively fresh water. The site is an important wintering and staging area for birds, including *Ardea cinerea* (93), *Egretta alba* (58), *E. garzetta* (276), *Ardeola ralloides* (145), *Ixobrychus minutus* (14), *Anas penelope* (24,997), *A. crecca* (2,094), *A. clypeata* (13,928), *Aythya ferina* (7,358), *A. nyroca* (281), *Circus aeruginosus* (115), *Porphyrio porphyrio* (8), *Fulica atra* (15,790), *Recurvirostra avosetta* (2,818), *Vanellus spinosus* (48), *C. alexandrinus* (617), *Tringa totanus* (3,378), *T. stagnatilis* (66), *Calidris minuta* (784), *Larus cachinnans* (128), *L. minutus* (3,906), and *Chlidonias hybridus* (3,530). The extensive *Phragmites* beds in the southern and eastern parts of the lake, currently covering about 20,000ha, provide an important breeding habitat for *Ixobrychus minutus* and *Porphyrio porphyrio*. (1a,2a,2b,2c,3a,3b,3c)

\*Figures refer to 1989/90 winter; data provided by the Egyptian authorities.

**Conservation Issues** Fishing is regulated, but there is no closed season. There are proposals for protecting a number of the islands for nature conservation. In an attempt to control the spread of the *Phragmites* beds, the local fishermen graze domestic buffalo on the more accessible areas, although this has been largely unsuccessful as a management measure. The active coastal sand dunes frequently block the channel connecting the lagoon with the sea, but the channel is kept open artificially through dredging. Substantial volumes of water laden with fertilizer and pesticide runoff enter the lagoon's southern side through a number of drainage channels. This has led to rapid eutrophication and pollution. Water quality problems have combined with increasing levels of commercial fishing activity, resulting in major declines in fish production. 5km of coastal protection barriers have been erected between Baltim and El Burge. The surface area of the Lake Burullus has decreased by about 20% this century as a result of infill and conversion activities, with new reclamation projects currently being developed along the southern shore. There are also plans for the construction of a major road over the northern coastal bar; this would include a 3km long bridge and excavation of a second channel linking the lagoon with the sea. There is also a proposal for diverting flood water from the River Nile into Lake Burullus, which would be developed as a water storage reservoir. In

*Egypt*

view of information contained within the 1990 Egyptian National Report, Lake Burullus was added to the "Montreux Record" of sites likely to undergo change in ecological character. A preliminary application of the Ramsar Monitoring Procedure was carried out in 1991. The report of this preliminary mission recommended that the Government of Egypt should submit an application to the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Fund to facilitate the initiation of a number of urgently required surveys and management actions.

