

20. Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

1. **Date this sheet was completed/updated:**
August 1997

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. **Country:** Russian Federation

3. **Name of wetland:** Khingano-Arkharinskaya Lowland

4. **Geographical coordinates:** 49°10'N, 130°00'E

5. **Altitude:** 90-150 m a.s.l.

6. **Area:** about 200,000 ha

7. **Overview:** Unique wet forest-steppe (prairie) ecosystems in the Amur valley, a very important breeding area for rare and threatened birds.

8. **Wetland Type** (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex I of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

marine-coastal: A . B . C . D . E . F . G . H . I . J . K

inland: L . M . N . O . P . Q . R . Sp . Ss . Tp . Ts
U . Va . Vt . W . Xf . Xp . Y . Zg . Zk

man-made: 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . 5 . 6 . 7 . 8 . 9

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant: Ts, Tp, O, M

9. **Ramsar Criteria:** (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12, next page.)

1a . 1b . 1c . 1d . ³ 2a . 2b . 2c . 2d . ³ 3a . 3b . 3c . ³ 4a . 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site: 1c, 2a

10. **Map of site included?** Please tick *yes* -or- *no*

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

11. **Name and address of the compiler of this form:** Vadim G. Vinogradov (vavy@aha.ru)

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page: 1c - the site incorporates unique wetland habitats located in a trans-border position; 2a - this is a very important breeding area for rare and threatened birds.

13. General location: In southern Amur Region, near the border with China, 175 km southeast of the city of Blagoveshchensk. The site includes vast floodplain areas in the middle course of the Amur River, between the Bureya and Khingan Rivers.

14. Physical features: Plains in the Amur valley are composed of the Neogene and Pleistocene silty-loam lacustrine sediments. The lower portion of the floodplain includes islands and beaches; the higher-level floodplain contains a complex of levees, oxbow lakes and marshes. Above the floodplain, there are two terraces.

The rivers are fed mainly by rain. The spring flood is not high, the level of water may rise considerably after monsoon rains in summer.

The area has a monsoon temperate climate (the most continental variant of this climatic type). The summers in the area are the hottest in the Russian Far East. The mean air temperatures are +20.5°C in July and -25.5°C in January. The warm period, when the temperature is above zero, lasts for 100-110 days. The growing period for vegetation is 140-160 days. Annual precipitation varies from 550 to 600 mm, with only 15% falling in winter. The snow cover is not deep, and the soil freezes to 1.5-2 m. The soils are predominantly of the meadow types, with a high humus content (5-12%). The humus horizon is 20-60 cm deep. At lower places, gley soils occur, with an underlying layer of clay. The high-level floodplain is covered by forests on soddy-alluvial and brown soils.

15. Hydrological values: No information

16. Ecological features: Wet meadows with herbs, *Calamagrostis* sp. and *Carex* sp. are the most widespread. Being underlain by clays, these meadows are waterlogged for a long time after heavy rains. The herbs are dense and tall (100-120 cm high), and are dominated by *Calamagrostis purpurascens* (80-85% of the biomass), *Lycopus* sp., *Lythrum* sp., *Valeriana* sp. and *Sanguisorba* sp. Meadows at the high-level floodplain show a rich diversity (60 species) and abundance of flowering plants, such as *Lilium* sp., *Nypripedium* sp., *Iris ensata* and *Paeonia lactiflora*. On the terraces, dry meadows with *Calamagrostis epigeios* and various herbs are found. These are not large in area. Grass fens are situated in depressions underlain by clays. The herbage is 40-50 cm high. These communities are dominated by *Calamagrostis neglecta*, *Carex lasiocarpa* and *Carex meyerana*. *Eriophorum* sp. occur at lower levels of the floodplain. The mouths of the rivers and shores of the lakes are overgrown with reed *Phragmites*, which is up to two metres high, as well as with *Typha* sp., *Sagittaria* sp., *Acorus calamus*, *Menyanthes* sp. and *Lycopus* sp. Aquatic plants include *Potamogeton* sp., *Lemna* sp., *Nimphaea tetragona* and *Trapa natans*.

17. Noteworthy flora: The flora of the area is represented by 700 species of vascular plants. Ten species listed in the Russian Red Data Book occur at the site. These are *Brasleria scheberi*, *Dioscorea nipponica*, *Aldrovanda vesiculosa*, *Iris ensata*, *Cypripedium calceolus*, *C. macranthon*, *Pagonia japonica*, *Paeonia lactifolia*, *P. obovata* and *Trapa natans*.

18. Noteworthy fauna:

Birds

Migrating waterbirds include greylag goose *Anser anser*, white-fronted goose *Anser albifrons*, bean-goose *Anser fabalis*, brent goose *Branta bernicla*, Baikal teal *Anas formosa*, mallard *A. platyrhynchos* and northern pintail *A. acuta*. Falcated duck *Anas falcata* is a common breeding species. The breeding avifauna of the eastern forest-steppe contains representatives of the Chinese and European faunistic types. The former includes pied harrier *Circus melanoleucus*, Siberian ruddy crane *Porzana paykullii*, short-winged cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*, black-browed reed wabler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* and grey-hooded bunting *Emberiza fucata*. The latter includes yellow-breasted bunting *Emberiza aureola*, blue-headed wagtail *Motacilla flava* and other common species.

The wetlands of the area are of particular importance for breeding populations of rare and threatened birds. Fifteen species listed in the Russian Red Data Book have been registered at the site (Andronov, 1987), including:

- Oriental white stork *Ciconia boyciana*: a breeding species (55-70 pairs).
- Black stork *C. nigra*: an occasional breeding species (several pairs).
- Swan goose *Anser cygnoides*: a rare migrant (<15).
- Mandarin duck *Aix galericulata*: a breeding species (15-20 pairs in the Khingansky Nature Reserve).
- Chinese merganser *Mergus squamatus*: a rare migrant.
- Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: a rare breeding species (1 pair).
- Golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: a rare visitor during the migration seasons.
- White-tailed eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: a breeding species (several pairs).
- Gyr falcon *Falco gyrfalco*: a rare migrant.
- Japanese crane *Grus japonensis*: a breeding species (30-35 pairs).
- Siberian crane *Grus leucogeranus*: a rare migrant.
- White-naped crane *Grus vipio*: a breeding species (10 pairs).
- Hooded crane *Grus monacha*: a passage migrant (to 50 birds).
- Great bustard *Otis tarda dybowskii*: a rare breeding species (2-3 pairs).
- Little whimbler *Numenius minutus*: a rare migrant.

Mammals

The regional mammal fauna contains representatives of the oriental fauna, such as *Tscherskia triton*, *Lepus mandshuricus* and *Nyctereutes procyonoides*. Steppe species include *Cricetulus barabensis* and *Spermophilus undulatus*.

19. Social and cultural values: The first Russian settlements in the Far-Eastern region were located in the Khingano-Arkharinskaya lowland.

20. Land tenure/ownership: The Khingansky Nature Reserve is state owned, the rest of the area is in communal ownership.

21. Current land use: Agriculture is well developed. The lands are also used for hay-making and cattle grazing.

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects: The major threats are associated with the burning of meadow vegetation in dry periods.

23. Conservation measures taken: The site includes about 70% of the area of the Khingansky Nature Reserve ('zapovednik'), established in 1963. The reserve consists of two sites: a 76,636 ha major site, located in the southeastern portion of the Ramsar site, and a 21,200 'subsidiary' site in the northwestern portion. The latter was established in 1978 to protect important habitats of cranes and oriental white stork *Ciconia boyciana*, and has been included entirely into the Ramsar site. The nature reserve has a 26,500 ha buffer zone.

A part of the site is protected in the Ganukan Reserve ('zakaznik').

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: It has been proposed to include the whole catchment of the Gryaznaya River into the Khingansky Nature Reserve.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: Regular research into natural ecosystems were started only in the 1970s. So far, these have been restricted to the ornithology and theriology. The prairie vegetation has received little study.

26. Current conservation education: No information

27. Current recreation and tourism: No information

28. Jurisdiction:

Territorial: Administration of Amur Region (135 Lenin Street, Blagoveshchensk 675023, Russia).

Functional: State Committee of the Russian Federation for Environmental Protection (4/6 Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street, Moscow 123812, Russia).

29. Management authority: Administration of the Khingansky Nature Reserve (5 Dorozhny Per., Arkhara, Amur Region 676780, Russia).

The Ganukan Reserve is managed by the Amursky Regional Hunting Management Office.

30. Bibliographical references: Andronov (1987); Vasiljev, Matyushkin & Kuptsov (1985); Bocharnikov & Shibaev (1996).
