

**Inclusion of  
CERKNIŠKO JEZERO Z OKOLICO  
(Lake Cerknica and its environs)  
in the List of Wetlands of International Importance**

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

*Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.*

Note 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. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

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

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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**2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:**

September 2005

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**3. Country:**

Slovenia

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**4. Name of the Ramsar site:**

Cerkniško jezero z okolico (Lake Cerknica and its environs)

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**5. Map of site included:** Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

**a) hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes*  -or- *no*

**b) digital (electronic) format** (optional): *yes*  -or- *no*

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**6. Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude):

45° 45' N / 14° 23' E

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**7. General location:**

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

The proposed area is located in the municipality of Cerknica at the south of Slovenia (35 km south-southwest of Ljubljana and 10 km east of Postojna).

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**8. Elevation:** (average and/or max. & min.)

Average 550 m

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**9. Area:** (in hectares)

7250 ha

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## 10. Overview:

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

The intermittent lake Cerknjško jezero is part of the catchment of the River Ljubljana; it has no surface outflow, instead, all its waters discharge exclusively underground. A lake is formed during periods of rain when the large amounts of water can no longer be drained through the system of sinkholes. Cerknjško polje with Cerknjško jezero is amongst the biggest karst poljes in Slovenia; with respect to the habitats it supports, it is a seasonally flooded river plain rather than a lake. The lake is famous for its underground inflow-outflow water system. On the surface, numerous picturesque karst phenomena can be seen such as karst sources and springs, estavelles, ponors and ponor caves. Cerknjško jezero is of significant national importance also as a nesting site of waders and waterbirds.

Rakov Škocjan is a valley formed by the collapse of ceilings of underground caves. Through the valley flows the River Rak which takes rise at Zelške jame and sinks in Tkalca jama. The Rak gets its water mainly from Cerknjško jezero, the Javorniki mountain range and Zelše sinkholes. Rakov Škocjan, is also part of the Ljubljana catchment area.

The cave, Križna jama was first described in 1832. It is renown mostly for its underground lakes with sinter deposits and remnants of bones of cave-bears that have been found in this cave. Less known is the fact that Križna jama is ranked the fourth in the world in terms of its richness of troglionts.

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## 11. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline 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).

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

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## 12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. 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).

Tables 1-3 in Annex 1 include species of the Notranjski Regional Park according to the Bird and Habitats Directives, Red Data Lists of nesting birds and Red Data Lists of vascular plants.

### Criterion 1

Cerknjško jezero is the largest and the most typical intermittent karst lake in the biogeographical region concerned.

### Criterion 2

The area of Cerknjško jezero is a nesting site for some 60 to 100 pairs of corncrake *Crex crex*. Currently, this amounts to approx. 15 % of the Slovene population of this globally threatened species. Also present in the proposed area are the species from Annex I to the Bird Directive as follows: the spotted crane, *Porzana porzana*, the little crane, *Porzana parva*, the bittern, *Botaurus stellaris*, the little bittern, *Ixobrychus minutus*, the ferruginous duck, *Aythya nyroca*, the honey buzzard, *Pernis apivorus*, the white-tailed eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla*, the short-toed eagle, *Circus gallicus*, the barred warbler, *Sylvia nisoria* and the lesser grey shrike, *Lanius collurio*.

### Criterion 3

Rare and endemic cave species found in the underground world in the area of Cerknjško jezero and Rakov Škocjan, predominantly in the subterranean connection between the two of them, and in Križna jama are as follows: a cave beetle, *Leptodirus bochenwartii*, cave salamander, *Proteus anguinus*, *Pseudocandona pretneri*, *Anophthalmus scopoli*, *Anophthalmus heteromorphus*, *Bathyscimus byssinus acuminatus*, *Bathyscimus serkoi*, *Bathyscimus slavkoi*, *Bathyscimus trifurcatus*, *Bathysciotes khevenbueelleri*, *Troglobrychus anophthalmoides*, *Typhlotrechus bilimeki*, *Machaerites ravasini*.

### Criterion 4

The area of Cerknjško jezero is a nesting site for some 60 to 100 pairs of corncrake *Crex crex*, a globally threatened species. It is the only nesting site in Slovenia for the red-necked grebe, *Podiceps griseigena*, and the

redshank, *Tringa totanus*, as well as for the ferruginous duck, *Aythya nyroca*. For 15 pairs of the common snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*, Cerkniško jezero is the most important if not the sole nesting site in Slovenia. It is also a habitat of the most important and largest nesting population of the yellow wagtail, *Motacilla flava*, and the reed bunting, *Emberiza schoeniculus*. The quality of habitats as nesting grounds for birds depends on the floodwater elevation and dynamics.

In the cave Vranja jama at Zadnji kraj over 25,000 common frogs hibernate which makes this cave the world's largest known wintering site of *Rana temporaria*.

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**13. 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) biogeographic region:**

Alpine biogeographic region

**b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme** (include reference citation):

EU biogeographic regionalization, in accordance with the Habitat Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, [92/43/EEC](#)).

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**14. 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.

Cerkniško jezero is part of the River Ljubljanica catchment area; it has no surface outflow; instead, all its waters discharge exclusively underground. A lake is formed during periods of rain when the large quantity of water can no longer be drained through the system of sinkholes. Through the middle of the polje flows the main water current Stržen which takes rise in the karst sources of Obrh and Cemun nearby the Gorenje jezero village at SE of Cerkniško jezero; the two sources bring water from Loška dolina where the River Loški Obrh sinks in the karst cave Golobina adjacent to the Dane village. In the north, the bottom of the lake is built of impermeable dolomite while in the southeast it is of cretaceous limestone which is more soluble in water and allows development of karst phenomena. In addition, there are many fractures in the bottom, with the largest of them located at the junction of the dolomite and limestone formations (the fault named Idrijska prelomnica) where the biggest systems of sinkholes have been formed (Rešeto, Vodonos, Retje, Ponikve). A bit further away from the fault there are the sinkholes of Zadnji kraj, the largest among them being: Kotli, Velika Bobnarica, Mala Bobnarica, Gebnu and Zajcovke. The water which drains and disappears underground through the above sinkholes resurges again in the sources at Bistra and its environs at the edge of Ljubljansko barje.

The bottom of the lake is covered with quaternary and holocenic alluvial deposits. Across the dolomite bedrock on the NW flows the Cerkniščica, which has deposited a large amount of material so the area is slightly elevated above the rest of the lake. The thickness of the deposits that form the nowadays Cerkniško jezero varies across the area, ranging between four to ten metres. Locally, thickness may reach up to sixteen metres. Lake deposits consist mainly of loam (often carbonate), clay and sand.

The largest sinkholes are the karst caves on the west side of Cerkniško jezero of which Velika Karlovica, Mala Karlovica, Narti, Svinjska jama and Kamni are particularly noteworthy for their size and the length of 7307 m of the explored underground. The water from the caves flows into in the Rak in Rakov Škocjan through the sources at Mali naravni most, Kotel and Kotličiči; these sources receive also an abundant underground supply of water from the Javorniki mountain range, known among experts as the Javorniki subterranean stream. The max. outflow of water through the underground channels of the Velika Karlovica and Mala Karlovica sinkholes ranges between 40 and 55 m<sup>3</sup>/s.

The max. total inflow to the polje may reach up to 240 m<sup>3</sup>/s, while the outflow is limited to 40 – 90 m<sup>3</sup>/s. When at full size, the surface area of the lake ranges between 26 and 33 km<sup>2</sup>. The elevation of the water

table oscillates between 547.5 and 553 m asl. The water of the Cerknjško jezero has high hardness and alkalinity (pH ranging between 7.5 in 8.5). Researches have shown that it is only slightly nutrient-laden (nitrogen and phosphorus). When Cerknjško polje, covered with rich wetland vegetation, is flooded, it acts as a natural purification system. During periods of drought, its waters are more burdened. Then the self-purifying capacity of the remaining water bodies may be exceeded. The laden water drains underground where it spreads in an uncontrolled way through subterranean channels.

The average monthly temperature ranges from -1.5 °C in January up to 17.5 °C in July. The difference between the average monthly minimum and maximum amounts to 8.2 °C in January and 12.7 °C in July. The average annual precipitation amounts to 1,700 mm, reaching its maximum in November. February is the driest month with the average precipitation of only 100 mm. Cerknjško jezero is predominantly dry in summer and in late winter and filled with water during autumn rains and spring snow melt.

Rakov Škocjan is a karst valley, approx. 1.5 km long and 200 m wide. It is situated in the northern foothills of Javorniki at the altitude of 500 – 510 m asl. The River Rak flows through it.

The main source of the Rak is in the east of Rakov Škocjan. The Rak's waters, which take rise in Zelške jame, are a discharge from Cerknjško jezero through the underground channels of Velika Karlovica and Mala Karlovica. At many points, the ceilings of the Zelške jame caves have already collapsed. The Rak takes rise in a cavity and then flows across a narrow seasonally flooded flat. From the west it receives water from several smaller tributaries resurging at the edge of the valley. The main water contributor of the Rak are the Kotliči and Kotel sources, contributing at times of high water level the largest share of water to the Rak's watercourse. In the area of Rakov Škocjan, there are seven more karst sources that bring water from Cerknjško polje and Javorniki mountain range.

The surface watercourse of the Rak ends after 800 m at Veliki naravni most. After this natural bridge, the Rak sinks in the Tkalca jama cave, which has been explored in the length of approx. 2 km. The distance between this cave and the sources in the Planinska jama at the edge of Planinsko polje amounts to some 4 km.

The hydrological regime of the Rak is closely connected with the outflow from Cerknjško jezero. When the lake dries out, the Rak's river bed dries out, too. This connection has been proved by water tracing; a subterranean connection between the caves of Tklaca jama and Planinska jama (i.e. the Unica) has been proved, too. Cerknjško jezero and Rakov Škocjan intercommunicate through the systems of caves of Velika Karlovica and Mala Karlovica (7307 m) at the Cerknjško jezero side and the caves of Zelške jame (4749 m) at the Rakov Škocjan side. Only some 50 m of the intercommunication between the two systems remain to be explored.

Križna jama is situated in the SE of Cerknica polje. It is 8,273 meters long and up to 32 meters deep. The cave is best known for its 22 underground lakes divided by gours (barriers formed by calcium carbonate). The water flowing through the cave comes from the Bloke plateau through its underground paths. Currently, there are two caves, the old cave, first described in 1832, and the new cave discovered in 1991. The caves are separated by a siphon. The water level in the cave varies and depends on the water quantity and the precipitation regime.

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## 15. Physical features of the catchment area:

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

Cerknjško jezero is the largest and the most typical intermittent karst lake in Slovenia. Its hydrographic catchment area amounts to approx. 475 km<sup>2</sup>.

The entire catchment area is formed in calcareous rock, ie Triassic and Jurassic dolomite and Jurassic and Cretaceous limestone. Triassic dolomite forms the surface of Cerknjško polje and the southwest foothills of Slivnica Mt. It reappears at Gorenje jezero and from there it continues towards Loško polje. The same bedrock can be found at the northeast part of Cerknjško polje, except near Grahovo, Žerovnica and

Lipsenje, where there is Jurassic (Liassic) limestone. The eastern edge of Cerknjško polje up to Križna gora and Loško polje is underlain by Jurassic bedrocks: stratified Liassic limestone and dolomites, crumbly Malm limestone and unstratified grained dolomite.

The prevailing soil types are Brown forest soil and rendzina. Amphigley and hypogley soils have developed at the bottom of Cerknjško polje. They are typical grassland soils. The mineral-organic soils that prevail at Cerknjško polje are very fertile, however, the overabundance of moisture lessens their agricultural value.

Edges of karst poljes are mostly overgrown with different types of forests. In the western parts prevail large and well preserved forests of the type *Abieti-Fagetum dinaricum*, while the *Hacquetio Fagetum* type is predominant in the eastern parts. The floor of poljes is mainly used for agricultural purposes. Thus, agriculture and forestry are the most prevalent land-use in the area.

The climate is markedly continental with a relatively high precipitation level (1600-1800 mm/year). Thermal inversions often occur.

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## 16. Hydrological values:

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

Cerknjško jezero, Rakov Škočjan and Križna jama pertain to the catchment area of Ljubljana and they have an important role in the hydrological regime of this karst river, which one of the main tributaries of the Sava in Slovenia. Their main hydrological value lies in

- the holding back of high-waters;
- the system of intermittent streams and rivers;
- charging of aquifers;
- ensuring water supplies (water reservoirs).

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## 17. 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.

**P, Zk (b), M** – These types are equally represented on the Cerknjška polje.

There is also **W** wetland type, and along the stream in the southern part of the polje **Xf** type occurs.

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## 18. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

A wide variety of habitats can be found at Cerknjško polje, ranging from water habitats through transition to purely dryland habitats. The most characteristic feature of Cerknjško polje is that, due to the intermittent nature of its lake, the habitats it supports change constantly.

In the central part of Cerknjško jezero there is a large reedbed with a plant community of the common reed, *Phragmitetum australis*, and *Scirpetum lacustris*. The reedbed covers the zones called Tršćenke and Levišća as well as the zones along the water course Strežen and at Zadnji kraj. In the areas that are seasonally inundated or those with high groundwater level, sedge communities of *Caricetum elatae* are present, whereas in the zones that get flooded only by high waters there are large sedge beds of *Caricetum gracilis* communities. In the southeast end of the lake there is a small transition mire named Dujice. Here, the association of *Rhynchosporetum albae* has developed. In the marshy soil rich in carbonates *Schoeno ferruginei-Molinietum caeruleae* and *Schoeno nigricantis-Molinietum caeruleae* thrive. Here, the water table is high throughout the year and ecologically, the association represents a transition between a fen and a water meadow.

At the north, east and south edge of the reedbed there are humid and mesophile grasslands with heterogeneous vegetation. The seasonally flooded zones at the north and east edge of Cerknjško jezero support the association of *Deschampsio-Plantaginetum altissimae* with variety of species. Large surfaces are covered also with plant association of the black bog-rush plant and purple moorgrass – *Schoeno nigricantis-Molinietum* – a plant community dependent on regular mowing. Hay harvesting at wet grasslands is extensive – it is done relatively late in the year, depending on the withdrawal of spring flood waters. At the shallow and relatively dry calcareous ground at the edge of Cerknjško jezero and at Otok, the association of *Bromo-Brachyopodium pinnati* thrives, while the grasslands on the moderately humid edge with deep soil, which have been turned through additional fertilising into anthropogenic grassland, support the *Pastinaco-Arrhenatheretum* association.

Scrubs that have been maintained in the central part, along the banks of the Stržen and its tributaries, pertain partly to the *Pruno-Ligustretum* association. Along the entire edge of Cerknjško jezero there are scrubs which could be considered a particular habitat. At some more elevated locations there are large zones of dense scrubs, named Jezerska gmajna and Martinjak.

An interesting feature of Cerknjško jezero is that typical lake habitats cannot be found there. The quality of habitats as nesting grounds for birds depends on the floodwater elevation and dynamics. Water is permanent only at the north end of Cerknjško jezero around the swallow holes with confining edges: Rešeto, Vodonos and Retje whereas in the estavelles of Zadnji kraj and Levišća water lingers for a longer period. At the south and east parts of Cerknjško jezero water lingers in the streambeds of the Obrh, Lipsenjščica and Žerovnišćnica.

The zones under forest in Rakov Škocjan are mostly overgrown with the silver fir-beech Dinaric forests (*Abieti-Fagetum dinaricum*). More humid sites support the oak and beech – *Quercus roborri-Carpinetum* – community. On the occasionally flooded sites on the banks of the Rak grow willows, alders and poplars. The parts of the Rak's banks that are mowed for hay have the characteristics of wet grasslands.

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### 19. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. 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.*

Vegetation in the lake area is very diverse and influenced by various factors. From the phytocenologic point of view, many species found in the area represent a link between the Central European-Alpine and Illyric (Dinaric)-Submediterranean regions. The species whose northern phytogeographical boundary is at Cerknjško jezero or very close to it are as follows: the tall plantain, *Plantago altissima*, the thistle, *Cirsium pannonicum*, the wild gladiolus, *Gladiolus illyricus*, and *Peucedanum coriaceum* var. *pospichalii*. The *Trifolium velebiticum* has its northern phytogeographical boundary at Cerknjško jezero, too.

Some plants, though, reach at Cerknjško jezero their southern phytogeographical boundary or get very close to it. These are: *Carex buxbaumii*, *Ranunculus reptans*, *Rhynchospora alba*, *Trichoporum alpinum*, *Utricularia intermedia* and *U. minor*.

Some other endangered plants or plants of interest that can be found at Cerknjško jezero are as follows: the flowering rush, *Butomus umbellatus*, the arrowhead, *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, the yellow flag, *Iris pseudacorus*, the hedge hyssop, *Gratiola officinalis*, the marsh gentian, *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, the marsh orchises, *Orchis laxiflora* and *Orchis palustris*, the marsh lousewort, *Pedicularis palustris*, the fen ragwort, *Senecio paludosus*, the bogbean, *Menyanthes trifoliata*, the sundew, *Drosera intermedia*, and the Alpine cottongrass, *Trichophorum alpinum*.

Fifty-two higher plant species from the Slovenian Red List are found at Cerknjško jezero (Annex 1, Table 3).

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## 20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. 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 RLS.*

Even though Cerknjško jezero is of relatively small size, it provides habitat supporting a highly diversified animal community.

There are not many sites in Slovenia and not even in Europe where so many bird species could be found in an area of such a small size. Until now, 256 birds species have been identified there, and for some 100 species of these, the area is a nesting site. It is the sole nesting site in Slovenia for the red-necked grebe, *Podiceps griseigena*, and the redshank, *Tringa totanus*, as well as for the ferruginous duck, *Aythya nyroca*. For 15 pairs of the common snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*, Cerknjško jezero is the most important if not the sole nesting site in Slovenia. It is also a habitat of the most important and largest nesting population of the yellow wagtail, *Motacilla flava*, and the reed bunting, *Emberiza schoeniculus*. The white-tailed eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* can be seen here all year round; even though Cerknjško jezero has not been confirmed as its nest site yet it is very important for this species as it is by far the only sustenance zone that is large enough.

The most prevalent species among reptiles is the grass snake, *Natrix natrix*, in the water part of the site, while the green lizard, *Lacerta viridis*, prevails at the shore and on drier ground. The common viper, *Vipera berus*, and the common or viviparous lizard, *Lacerta vivipara*, can be also found at the littoral stretch; in total, 11 reptile species can be found at Cerknjško jezero, among them the pond turtle, *Emys orbicularis*.

Cerknjško jezero is renown for the richness of amphibians. Early in the spring, in March and April, are prevalent common toads, *Bufo bufo*, that migrate in large numbers from the neighbouring forests to the lake water for spawning. Soon, the common frog, *Rana temporaria*, join them. In the cave Vranja jama at Zadnji kraj over 25,000 common frogs hibernate which makes this cave the world's largest known wintering site of *Rana temporaria*. Among other anuran species that can be found at Cerknjško jezero are the frogs *Rana x esculenta* and *Hyla arborea*, the yellowbelly toad, *Bombina variegata* and the agile or spring frog, *Rana dalmatina*. Other amphibians that can be found at Cerknjško jezero are the newts, *Triturus carnifex*, *Triturus vulgaris meridionalis* and the fire salamander, *Salamandra salamandra*. It is worthwhile to mention here that a cave salamander, *Proteus anginus*, has been found in the caves at the edge of the lake's water system.

The ichthyofauna of Cerknjško jezero includes the following autochthonous species: the chub, *Leuciscus cephalus*, the tench, *Tinca tinca*, the minnow, *Phoxinus phoxinus*, the pike, *Esox lucius*, the bullhead, *Cottus gobio* and the burbot, *Lota lota*. Fishermen have planted in the lake the carp, *Cyprinus carpio*, the rudd, *Scardinius erythrophthalmus* and, in recent years, the perch, *Perca fluviatilis*.

Cerknjško jezero is also rich in malacofauna. So far, 136 snail species and 6 shell species have been identified in the area. Of special interest are species that live in the water sources and the subterranean species, of which 10 are endemic to the Ljubljana catchment area.

At Lake Cerknica and its environs, 36 species of dragonflies have been recorded, 428 beetle species and 125 species of diurnal butterflies. This means that at Cerknjško jezero 70 % of all butterfly species living

in Slovenia or one quarter of all European butterfly species may be seen. Here are found the threatened species of the alcon blue, *Maculinea alcon*, the scarce large blue, *Maculinea teleius*, the large copper, *Lycena dispar* and the *Euphydryas aurinia*.

Among mammals, the common otter, *Lutra lutra* and the water shrew, *Neomys anomalus*, living on the banks of the tributaries, are the most dependant on the lake's water body. Sightings of the brown bear, *Ursus arctos*, on the lake's shore, scavenging dead fish when the lake dries up, are not uncommon. The high abundance of roe deer and red deer often attract the wolf, *Canis lupus*. Traces found in muddy holes full of dead fish bear witness to the fact that the red fox, *Vulpes vulpes*, the European badger, *Meles meles*, and even the European lynx, *Lynx lynx* and the wild cat, *Felis silvestris*, feed on the fish, too. Among martens, the *Martes foina* is very frequent, whereas the European polecat, *Mustela putorius*, has become rare. The ermine, *Mustela erminea*, and the least weasel, *Mustela nivalis* are also found there. Cerkniško polje, including the zone of the lake in the dry season, provide habitat for numerous field voles, *Microtus agrestis*. In the night, the eastern European hedgehog, *Erinaceus concolor*, can be often seen. Also nocturnal are the edible dormouse, *Glis glis*, and the forest dormouse, *Dryomys nitedula*.

An important characteristic of the larger area and the karst caves in particular is the underground fauna (see also 12).

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## 21. Social and 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.

Many archaeological sites provide evidence for early settlement of the environs of Cerkniško jezero, dating from Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age through Roman and Middle Age periods.

Among the largest archaeological sites are the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Iron Age settlement at Gorica, an island in the middle of the lake. Prehistoric settlements have been discovered at the elevations and hills bordering Cerkniško jezero. They are dated between 12th and 4th centuries BC.

At Cerknica, a Roman necropolis has been discovered; in 13th century, a castle was located at the edge of the precipice over Svinjska jama. Another and much bigger mediaeval castle, Šteberk, was located on the hill at the source of the Šteberščica, one of the tributaries of Cerkniško jezero. The first mention of the name Cerknica in the remaining written evidence is from 1040, when 50 rural households at Cerknica and its environs were transferred to the ownership of the Acquilea patriarch.

From 16th century onwards, the karst hydrological features of Cerkniško jezero have attracted many scientists and travellers. Through the history, there have been many different descriptions of Cerkniško jezero and its seasonal floods, vrtačas, dolines, ponors and numerous caves. In 1689, J. V. Valvasor described into detail his understanding of the system of the lake's filling up and discharging, as well as fishing and hunting and the life and customs at villages in the environs of Cerkniško jezero. The emptying of the lake was followed closely the entire population of the villages around Cerkniško jezero and from the neighbouring Loška dolina. The news on the lake's discharging was promptly delivered to those nearby lords of manors who had the right of fishing in the lake's sinkholes and watercourse beds.

In 19th century, the fishing right was granted to the best bidder; the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages were entitled to fishing to a certain extent, too. After 1955, the locals lost their right to fish in the watercourses and lower part of the lake as the fishing right was granted to the fishermen's society Ribiška družina Cerknica. The upper part of the lake is currently managed by the Public Fisheries Institute of Slovenia.

Over the past two centuries, a wide variety of plans involving reshaping of karst poljes have been developed. Two most opposing ideas from the two extreme poles are, first, that poljes should be converted into permanent lakes so as to exploit water for power plants and other ends, and, second, that floods should be done away with permanently and flat surfaces used for agriculture. Even though the



plans have not been implemented they have provided an additional impetus for the examination and research into the characteristics of the karst catchment area of the Ljubljana River.

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## **22. Land tenure/ownership:**

(a) within the Ramsar site:

The area is mostly privately owned, with only a small part of the land under municipal and national ownership. Under the project LIFE III NATURA, the Notranjski regijski park will purchase 150 ha of land in the area of Dujice, Levišča and Dolenjskih blat in the period 2004-2006.

(b) in the surrounding area:

The same holds true for the entire catchment area.

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## **23. Current land (including water) use:**

(a) within the Ramsar site:

A small part of the area is a popular recreation ground. The main activity continues to be agriculture.

In the area of 7510 ha, there are two main types of land use. Over 55 % of the area is covered by forests and 37 % by grasslands (meadows and pastures). Additional wetland areas represent 3 %, and 2 % of the area is arable land. All other land uses together cover just over 3 % of the total area of the polje and its surroundings (Annex 2).

(b) in the surroundings/catchment:

The two main activities in the entire catchment area are agriculture and forestry.

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## **24. 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 proposed area is suitable only for extensive agricultural use. The frequent and unpredictable floods make intensive agricultural use impossible. The quality of soil and climatic conditions are not very suitable for intensive agriculture. The prevalent current trends in the area are the abandonment of land cultivation and, consequently, the scrub encroachment and changing of the cultural landscape. By granting subsidies, the Slovene agri-environment programme may contribute towards an increase in the extensive land use in the future. The managing entity of the area has already started purchasing land. The purchased land will be used for extensive flora and fauna-friendly agriculture aiming at conservation and development of current biodiversity.

Even though some projects have already been elaborated, the area has still to develop tourist facilities. Unorganised tourism causes many adverse effects both on Cerknjško jezero and local population.

(b) in the surrounding area:

The same holds true for the entire catchment area.

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## **25. Conservation measures taken:**

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

The area is part of the Natura 2000 network according to the Bird and Habitat Directives, coincides with the Ecologically Important Area (EPO) and includes natural values of national and local importance (natural heritage) according to the Nature Conservation Act (ZON, Ur.L. RS 96/04, Official consolidated text, Articles 32 and 37). It additionally includes a protected area Rakov Škočjan (Ur.L. LRS št. 27-

171/49). And in its NW part links to the protected area of Planinsko polje (Primorske novice, Uradne objave, št. 29/84).

At the session on 23 July 2002, the Municipal Council of Cerknica adopted Ordinance on the Notranjski regijski park (Notranjska Regional Park). The regional park stretches over the entire territory of the Cerknica municipality. Settlements and industrial zones are excluded from the park. Thus, the total surface area of the park amounts to 210 km<sup>2</sup>. The entire proposed area is situated within the boundaries of the regional park. The area includes the zones of five nature reserves, namely Zadnji kraj, Dujice, Osredki, Levišča and Vranja jama at Cerkniško jezero and two natural monuments, namely Rakov Škocjan and Zelške jame. As yet, there is no valid management plan for the park and the proposed area. It is foreseen to be formulated in the coming years.

**Rakov Škocjan** has been protected as a landscape park since 1949. It is now included in the Notranjska Regional Park as a natural monument.

All this information is also represented on the attached maps.

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#### **26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

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

The proposed area is an IBA site under the Important Bird Area programme (IBA Cerkniško jezero); as such, it has been proposed to be classified as a special protection area (SPA) and included into Natura 2000 network.

One part of the fringe of the proposed area and Rakov Škocjan are included in the IBA site Snežnik, Pivka, Javorniki.

It is also included into SPA according to the Bird Directive and the pSCI according to the Habitat Directive, to be included into the Natura 2000 network.

At the end of 2003, a public authority was established for the management of the protected area *Notranjski regijski park*. As a priority task, a management plan should be drafted.

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#### **27. Current scientific research and facilities:**

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

Numerous research projects are currently underway, conducted by different scientific institutions such as Department of Biology at the Faculty of Biotechnology, Karst Research Institute ZRC-SAZU, National Institute of Biology and Notranjska Museum in Postojna, which has a fine collection of archeological, cultural and historic remnants of the past. However, with the selection of topics left to the discretion of individual institutions, the researches are not directed towards a common goal. Over the past 12 years, the society DOPPS- BirdLife Slovenia has been closely following the population of the corncrake, *Crex crex*, across the entire proposed area.

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#### **28. Current conservation education:**

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

What is said above about research holds true also for conservation education. The many beauties of Cerkniško jezero attract numerous visitors, however, there have been no systematic conservation education activities as yet. Notranjska Museum endeavours to renovate the Kravanje's house, located in the historic centre of Cerknica, and turn it into a museum where collections regarding Cerkniško jezero would be on display. Mounting of the museum collection exhibition is foreseen for 2006.

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#### **29. Current recreation and tourism:**

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

Cerkniško jezero is a popular destination for cyclists and hikers, for wind-surfers and skaters, for hunters and fishermen and, last but not least, for nature-lovers and bird-watchers from entire Europe. Even

though some projects have been already elaborated, the area has not been developed as a tourist site as yet. The area of Cerknjško jezero still needs to be organized for tourism development.

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### 30. Jurisdiction:

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

Slovenia , Municipality of Cerknica

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### 31. 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.

Notranjski regijski park  
Tabor 42  
SI- 1380 CERKNICA

Person responsible: Mr Valentin Schein, Director of the Park  
Contact: Leon Kebe, leon.kebe@notranjski-park.si

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### 32. Bibliographical references:

scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

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