

## **Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands**

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

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### **2. Country:**

UKRAINE

### **3. Date:**

April 7, 2003

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

**Desna River Floodplains**

### **5. Map of the Ramsar site:**

#### **a) hard copy**

yes

#### **b) digital (electronic) format**

raster

### **6. Geographical coordinates:**

52°19' N 33°23' E

### **7. General location:**

The Desna River catchment area, near the border of Ukraine with Russia; Sumaska

Oblast (Sumy Region; on the border with Chernigivska Oblast = Chernigiv Region), Seredyno-Budskiy Rayon (Serednyo-Buda District), near the villages of Ochkyne (Sumy Region) and Pushkari (Chernigiv Region). The site is located 45 km west of the town of Seredyno-Buda (10 thousand inhabitants) in Sumy Region, and 17 km north of the city of Novgorod-Siverskyi (20 thousand inhabitants) in Chernigiv Region.

**8. Elevation:**

About 120 m

**9. Area:**

4,270 ha

**10. Overview:**

The site is a well-developed river network with numerous former riverbeds, meanders, lakes, mires and meadows with developed riverside, aquatic and floodplain meadow vegetation. These natural conditions promote restoration of the local wetland ornitofauna (primarily species of the families *Anatidae*, *Ardeidae*, and *Rallidae*) and ichthyofauna, including sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*), a rare species of the sturgeon family. The site is located within Desnyansko-Starogutskiy National Nature Park, and is among the best preserved areas in the eastern part of Polissya, one of the most swamped natural regions of Europe.

**11. Ramsar Criteria:**

1      2      3      4      7      8

**12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:**

(1) The site is typical and, at the same time, the best preserved in its natural state part of the Desna River. It represents a well-developed river network with numerous former riverbeds, lakes, mires and floodplain meadow areas with corresponding vegetation types: aquatic and riverside, swamp, shrubs, meadow, and partly forest. Very typical for the Desna River over-damped meadows are characterized by high biodiversity; they represent best the specificity of Eastern (Novgorod-Siverske) Polissya.

(2) The good level of preservation of aquatic vegetation is manifested in the presence of rare aquatic plant communities listed in the Green Data Book of Ukraine; in particular, communities dominated by *Trapa natans*, *Nymphoides peltata*, and *Salvinia natans*. The site supports fish, mammals and birds listed in the IUCN Red List such as the starlet, *Acipenser ruthenus* (vulnerable), the Common otter *Lutra lutra* (vulnerable), the Eurasian beaver, *Castor fiber* (near threatened), the Corncrake, *Crex crex* (vulnerable) and many other bird species included in the annex 1 of the European Bird Directive.

(3) The site is very important in the northeastern part of Ukraine, especially for conservation of biodiversity of the Polissya Lowland, the most watered and swamped area of the Continental biogeographical region of Europe. Such mammals as *Arvicola terrestris* and *Ondatra zibethica*, rarely also *Castor fiber* and *Lutra lutra* (globally threatened species) occur near water. On riverside steep slopes and banks, there are nesting holes of Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* and Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. Reptiles are represented by *Emys orbicularis*, and amphibians, by *Triturus cristatus*, *Rana esculenta*, and *R. ridibunda*.

The fauna of floodplain meadows is represented by such mammals as *Talpa europaea* and *Nyctereutes procyonoides*; amphibians *Bufo viridis* and *Rana terrestris*; and reptile species *Natrix natrix*. Rather common birds are Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, Garganey *Anas querquedula*, Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Corncrake *Crex crex* (globally threatened species; more than 20 individuals), Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Great Snipe *G. media* (globally threatened species; 5-10 pairs), Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, and some other species.

(4) The site is important as a nesting area. Such wetland birds as Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* and Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis*, Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* and Little Crake *P. parva*, Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Coot *Fulica atra*, Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, White-winged Black Tern *Ch. leucopterus* and Whiskered Tern *Ch. hybrida*, nest among aquatic and riparian vegetation.

The Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, and Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* make their nests in reed thickets.

Between the new and old Desna River beds in the outskirts of Ochkyne village, there are colonies of grebes, ducks, plovers, sandpipers, gulls, and terns. The following rare species nest: Pintail *Anas acuta* and Shoveler *A. clypeata*; Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*; Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* and Little Gull *L. minutus*; Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* and Little Tern *S. albifrons*.

(7) The site is important for conservation of the diverse ichthyofauna characteristic for the Desna and Dnipro basins. It includes 33 fish species; the most widespread of them are: *Esox lucius*, *Rutilus rutilus*, *Gobio gobio*, *Alburnus alburnus* and *Perca fluviatilis*; rather rare species are *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*, *Tinca tinca*, *Abramis brama*, *Cyprinus carpio*, *Silurus glanis*, *Misgurnus fossilis*, *Lota lota*, *Leuciscus idus* and others. Within river sections with sandy bottoms, *Barbus*

*barbus borysthenticus* occurs, and *Eudontomyzon mariae* is constantly registered; both these are species listed in the Red Data Book of Ukraine (last species are rare in Europe). Such species as *Chondrostoma nasus*, *Anquilla anquilla*, *Acerina acerina* belong to regionally rare.

(8) Near Ochkyne village the rare species sterlet *Acipenser ruthenus* spawns constantly in April-May, at the depths of more than 10 m. All fish species, that one can meet here, have appropriate conditions for breeding and feeding, and young fishes rolled down the river, increasing ichthyofauna of lower areas of the river, and are coming in tributaries of the river.

### **13. Biogeography:**

Biogeographical region on the map of the Emerald Network of Europe: Continental.

According to geobotanical zoning of Ukraine: Polissyan subprovince (Novgorod-Siverske Polissya); East European province; European broadleaf forest region.

Basin affiliation: Desna River basin, a tributary of the Dnipro River in its middle reaches.

### **14. Physical features of the site:**

The Site is located on the northwestern slope of the Dnipro-Donets Depression. According to geomorphological zoning, the site's territory belongs to Dnipro (Prydniprovsky) Region of stratum-accumulative lowland plains of the East European Plain. The site is a lowland plain formed by fluvio-glacial and ancient alluvial layers. The relief has large and small forms; the large formations are represented by floodplain riparian and fluvio-glacial terraces, old valleys and ancient lake depressions. The Desna floodplains occupy the largest areas within the Site.

Soddy-podzolic sandy and loamy sand soils, formed on fluvioglacial sands and clayey sands, prevail within the site. Mires of the Desna floodplains and floodplain meadows are peaty.

Climate of the site is temperate-continental. Average annual air temperature is +5.4 °C; the warmest month is July, with average temperature +18.6°C; the coldest month is January, -8.0°C. The frost-free period lasts for 140 days; stable snow cover typically lasts for 110 days.

### **15. Physical features of the catchment area:**

The site is located within the riverbed of the Desna River (length 1 130 km, catchment area 89 thousand sq. km). It is the largest tributary of the Dnipro, which is formed on the Smolensk-Moscow Highland in Russia and ends at its confluence with the Dnipro near the city of Kyiv (Kiev).

There are several small tributaries of the Desna River within the Site.

#### **16. Hydrological values:**

The site's territory is located within the zone of moderate water content. Here the river network with numerous former riverbeds, meanders, lakes, mires and floodplain meadow areas is well developed owing to high precipitation (550-600 mm), considerable module of river runoff (up to 4.5 l/sec. per 1 sq. km), and geomorphologic peculiarities of the region. Its width varies from 1 to 4 km. The river water supply is mixed, with domination of the winter and spring runoff. Most of the flow comes from waters from melted snow, which caused floods in spring. The water level fluctuation range reaches 3-4 m. The floods promote exchange of genetic material between floodplain basins, especially for the aquatic fauna.

The site's territory belongs to the Dnipro-Donets groundwater basin located in Quaternary sediments. The hydrographic network is located above the basic underground streams, and thus provides considerable amounts of water to the groundwater network.

#### **17. Wetland Type:**

M P U Xp 9

#### **18. General ecological features:**

The plant cover of the site is represented by the complex of wetland and floodplain vegetation: aquatic, air-aquatic, riverside, swamp, shrubs, meadow and partly forest communities. The main formations of aquatic vegetation are represented by *Nymphaea alba* and *Nuphar luteum*; vegetation of eutrophic fens is represented mainly by communities of *Phragmites australis*, *Carex omskiana*, *Thypha latifolia*, *T. angustifolia*, and *Glyceria fluitans*. The main vegetation types occupying largest areas are floodplain over-damped meadows located between the central riverbed and former riverbeds, adjacent typical meadows with domination of *Festuca rubra*, *Poa pratensis*, and swamped meadows with domination of *Glyceria fluitans*, *Agrostis canina*, and *Phalaroides arundinacea*.

#### **19. Noteworthy flora:**

The following species of the wetland flora are listed in the Red Data Book of Ukraine: *Salix starkeana*, *Salix myrtilloides*, *Trapa natans*, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, *Nymphoides peltata*, *Salvinia natans*. Regionally rare plant species are *Nymphaea candida* and *Carex hartmanii*.

#### **20. Noteworthy fauna:**

Bird species rare in Ukraine and Europe occur within the site: Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (1 pair), Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (1 pair), Short-toyed Eagle *Circus gallicus* (1 pair), Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (several pairs, in droughty years only), Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (5-10 pairs). Rare species in

Ukraine, *Hirudo medicinalis* (invertebrates) and *Coronella austriaca* (reptile), are registered within the Site.

**21. Social and cultural values:**

There are no socio-cultural, architectural or religious values on the site. Forestry and commercial fishing are not conducted here.

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

**site:**

Lands of state ownership (lands of the State Water Fund), located within the zone of regulated recreation of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park, and are in use and tenure of the Park Administration as hunting lands according to the special Decision (Resolution) of 18 September 2001 of the Sumy Region Council.

**surrounding area:**

To the east from the site, there are lands of national (state) ownership (forestry) within the boundaries of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park, private agricultural lands, and lands of municipal ownership within settlements. West of the site there are lands of national ownership (lands of the Water Fund and forestry lands), private agricultural lands (arable lands, hayfields and pastures), and lands of municipal ownership within populated areas (settlements).

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

**(a) site:**

The Administration of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park regulates the nature use (including hunting wild animals and birds) according to the scientifically justified quotas, which are approved by the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine; nature conservation activities, scientific research, recreation activities (amateur fishing, picnics, boating, etc.).

**(b) surroundings/catchment:**

Agricultural and forestry activities, hunting and fishing, recreation.

**24. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:**

**at the site:**

In the past: drainage melioration, construction of ponds, fishing, hunting, haymaking, grazing, recreational activities.

At present: regulated hunting, fishing, haymaking and grazing, recreational activities.

**around the site:**

Forest felling and planting, hunting, fishing, recreation; plowing up of lands, haymaking and grazing.

**25. Conservation measures taken:**

The site's territory is a part of the Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park (16 215 ha), created by the Decree of the President of Ukraine of 23 February 1999.

Biodiversity management is conducted according to the Law of Ukraine "On the Nature Reserve Fund of Ukraine" (1992), and Regulation (By-law) on the Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park (2001).

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

Implementation of nature conservation measures and activities according to the Management Plan of the territory, protection, use and restoration of natural complexes of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park, approved by the Order of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine of 17 January 2001. A special management plan for the wetland of international importance will be developed.

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

Annual scientific researches within the frameworks of development of the Chronicle of Nature of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Park are carried out. The scientific researches are performed by scientific officers of the Park and the responsible Institute, Sumy State Agricultural University (Sumy). In the staff of the Park, there are 6 scientific officers; specialized experts are involved in the research when necessary. Monitoring for the state of biological and landscape diversity within the frameworks of the annual Program on Chronicles of Nature, inventory of the biota of the National Park, in particular, the flora of higher plants and algae, observation of bird migrations in the middle reaches of the Desna, and bird ringing during the nesting season are among the main research directions.

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

Permanently the environmental education activities among inhabitants, especially children of the rayon (district) center, Seredyno-Buda, and adjacent villages of Stara Guta and Znob'-Novgorodske, tourists nearby the Desna are conducting. Informational leaflets about the Park's values are published annually. There is no Visitor Center in the Site's area. Holding of regular (if possible, annual) ecological camps for school students of Sumy Region was started within the frameworks of the Project "Training in ecological camps in Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park" (Joint Ukrainian-Dutch Program of Cooperation in Conservation) in

2002; in the Park there is an ecological trail, which is partly located within the Site area.

In the site's area it is planned to build environmental education and recreation centers of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park.

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

The site's area is located within the recreational zone of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park. The Administration of the Park is responsible for maintaining the regime of conservation of natural complexes, equipping places for rest, and should regulate regimes and procedures of sport fishing and limited hunting. About 7 thousand tourists visit the area during the summer season annually.

### **30. Jurisdiction:**

Territorially the site's lands are subordinated to the State Administration of Seredyno-Buda Rayon (District) of Sumska Oblast (Sumy Region) of Ukraine.

Functionally the site's lands are subordinated to the Administration of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park (biodiversity conservation, hunting regulation) at the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine.

### **31. Management authority:**

Administration of Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park

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### **32. Bibliographical references:**

1. Chronicle of Nature: Desnyansko-Starogutskyi National Nature Park – 1 volume (2001).
2. Perspectives of Development of the Ecological Network and Transboundary Protected Areas in the Desna River Basin. Proceedings of the Russian-Ukrainian Working Group Meeting. – Moscow, WWF. – 81 pp.
3. Red Data Book of Ukraine: Flora - 1996, 608 pp.; Fauna - 1994, 464 pp. - Kyiv: Ukrainian Encyclopedia.
4. Reserves and National Nature Parks of Ukraine. – Kyiv: Vyscha Shkola (Higher School), 1999. – 230 pp.