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:

15-09-1997

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

DD	MM	YY
23	06	75

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:
Islamic Republic of Iran

3. Name of wetland: Gavkhouni Lake and marshes of the lower Zaindeh Rud

4. Geographical coordinates: 32°20'N 52°47'E

5. Altitude: (average, max., min.) 1,470 m **6. Area:** 63,300 ha (Ramsar site 43,000 ha)

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)
A large salt lake with associated fresh to brackish marshes, and a chain of freshwater marshes and floodplain wetlands along the main river entering the lake on the western side of Iran's Central Plateau. The site is important for wintering waterfowl. The wetlands have been designated as a Ramsar site, but are otherwise unprotected.

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: O M Ts Tp Ss W

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

1a · 1b · **1c** · **1d** | **2a** · 2b · 2c · 2d | **3a** · 3b · 3c | 4a · 4b

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

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:
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***Please provide additional information on each of the following categories by attaching extra pages* (please limit extra pages to no more than 10):**

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page. (Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document).

Gavkhouni Wetland is a particularly good representative example of a wetland which plays a substantial hydrological, biological or ecological role in the natural functioning of a major river basin or coastal system, especially where it is located in a trans-border position.

1a: It is a good representative example of a shallow natural wetland representative of the lowlands of Iran's Central Plateau.

1d: It is an example of a specific type of wetland, unusual in the appropriate biogeographical region.

3a: The wetland regularly supports over 20,000.

13. General location: (include the nearest large town and its administrative region)

Gavkhouni Wetland is located at the Western edge of the Central Plateau, about 40-100 km east to Southeast of the city of Isfahan, Isfahan Province.

14. Physical features: (e.g. geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

Gavkhouni Wetland is a large, shallow, saline lake in an enclosed drainage basin on the western edge of the deserts of Iran's Central Plateau. The lake is fed almost entirely by the Zaindeh Rud, a large river rising in the northern Zagros Mountains and passing through the city of Isfahan about 100 km upstream of the lake. There are about 1,000 ha of "delta" marshes at the mouth of the river, but otherwise the lake is largely devoid of vegetation other than algae. The marshes of the lower Zaindeh Rud comprise a chain of freshwater marshes and floodplain wetlands stretching for about 60 km along both banks of the river and ending at the delta marshes at Gavkhouni Lake. These wetlands are fed by flooding from the river itself and several irrigation channels, which make the wetland very polluted. The flooded areas often freeze over in winter, and in most years, the marshes are almost completely dry by late spring or early summer. Very little natural marsh vegetation remains, the main flooding now occurring on degraded steppe and land cultivated for wheat and rice.

15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

Although the lake is very important for its microclimate in the region, however, there is no appropriate information on its hydrology.

16. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

The marshes at the mouth of the Zaindeh Rud are dominated by *Phragmites* with some *Tamarix* scrub. Elsewhere around the lake, the vegetation is very sparse and confined to halophytic species. The remnants of natural marsh vegetation along the Zaindeh Rud are dominated by *Phragmites* and *Typha*. The adjacent land consists of degraded steppe and irrigated cultivation (rice and wheat).

17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc.)

There are extensive areas of reedbeds *Phragmites*, rush *Juncus* sp., sedge *Carex* sp. and *Scirpus* sp. around and as sparse areas inside the wetland.

18. Noteworthy fauna: (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.)

The wetland is situated in the middle of a flyway between the North and the South of Iran, therefore it is a very important wintering area for a variety of waterfowl, notably *Phoenicopterus ruber*, *Anser anser*, *Tadorna ferruginea*, *T. tadorna*, surface feeding ducks and some shorebirds. Mid-winter counts exceeded 15,000 birds in total, but due to the lack of possibility to see all around the wetland, there are no exact

numbers of different populations available. However, peak counts of Anatidae include 1,740 *Anser anser*, 3,280 *Tadorna ferruginea*, 11,300 *T. tadorna*, 4,560 *Anas penelope*, 6,600 *A. strepera*, 41,500 *A. crecca*, 7,960 *A. platyrhynchos*, 13,250 *A. acuta*, 8,370 *A. clypeata* and 225 *Aythya ferina*. Other wintering waterbirds have included up to 125 *Phalacrocorax carbo*, 25 *Egretta alba*, 21 *Ardea cinerea*, 69 *Platalea leucorodia*, 1,720 *Phoenicopterus ruber*, 3,500 *Fulica atra*, 51 *Grus grus*, 286 *Himantopus himantopus*, 146 *Recurvirostra avosetta*, 115 *Vanellus vanellus* and 30 *Gallinago gallinago*.
Wintering raptors have included *Halieetus albicilla* (up to 5), *Circus aeruginosus* (up to 5), *Aquila heliaca* and *Falco cherrug*. *Aegypius monachus* regularly occurs in the area.

19. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)
no information

20. Land tenure/ownership of:
Public (Government)

21. Current land use:
Parts of the floodplain are used for agriculture, grazing of livestock and wildfowl hunting. The salt lake is relatively inaccessible and undisturbed, although there is some grazing, hunting and cutting of brushwood for fuel in the marshes at the mouth of the river.

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:
None known

23. Conservation measures taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented)
Legal protection is very little, although Gavkhouni Lake and a large portion of the marshes of the lower Zaindeh Rud (43,000 ha) were designated as a Ramsar site on 23 June 1975. The wetlands have been identified as an Important Bird Area by Birdlife International (Evans, 1994).

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)
None known

25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)
Annual mid-winter censuses have been carried out by the Ornithology Unit of the Department of the Environment, since 1969 (with aerial surveys in 1973, 1974 and 1975).

26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)
None known

27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)
None known

28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)
Department of the Environment
PO Box 5181
15875 Teheran
Islamic Republic of Iran

29. Management authority: (name and address of local body directly responsible for managing the wetland)

Department of the Environment, address as mentioned above (28)

30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only)

Carp, E. (1980). *A Directory of Western Palearctic Wetlands.* IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

Evans, M.I. (1994). *Important Bird Areas in the Middle East*. BirdLife International, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Mansoori, J. (1983). *National Report on Iran's Wetlands of International Importance as Habitat for Waterfowl.* Prepared for the Groningen Conference, Netherlands, in May 1984.

Scott, D.A. (1976). *A List of the Wetlands of Iran*. Internal Report. Department of the Environment, Teheran, Iran.

Scott, D.A. (1995). *A Directory of Wetlands in the Middle East*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and IWRB, Slimbridge, United Kingdom.

List of bird species including counting results
Gavkhouni Wetland

waterfowl:

- globally threatened species	
Marmaronetta angustirostris	pass
Phoenicopterus ruber	380 w
Anthropoides virgo	pass
Grus grus	pass

- 0.5% or more of Middle East population	
Phalacrocorax carbo	125
Egretta alba	8
Ardea cinerea	11
Phoenicopterus ruber	380
Anser anser	550
Tadorna ferruginea	2,100
Tadorna tadorna	1,800
Anas platyrhynchos	2,350
Anas spp.	3,500
Fulica atra	3,500
Himantopus himantopus	120
Recurvirostra avosetta	750
Vanellus vanellus	75
Charadrius hiaculata	750
Tringa stagnatilis	630
Scolopax rusticola	65
Calidris alpina	2250
Larus spp.	287
Sterna spp.	300
Buteo buteo	3
Starling	450

Source: Environmental Office of Isfahan