

Ramsar Information Sheet

Published on 23 June 2023 Update version, previously published on : 20 March 2018

Norway Kongsfjorden



Designation date 24 July 1985 Site number 315

Coordinates 78°56'02"N 12°10'35"E

Area 710,00 ha

Color codes

Fields back-shaded in light blue relate to data and information required only for RIS updates.

Note that some fields concerning aspects of Part 3, the Ecological Character Description of the RIS (tinted in purple), are not expected to be completed as part of a standard RIS, but are included for completeness so as to provide the requested consistency between the RIS and the format of a 'full' Ecological Character Description, as adopted in Resolution X.15 (2008). If a Contracting Party does have information available that is relevant to these fields (for example from a national format Ecological Character Description) it may, if it wishes to, include information in these additional fields.

1 - Summary

Summary

Kongsfjorden is located in the Svalbard archipelago in western Spitsbergen, in the inner parts of Kongsfjorden. The Site consists of ten islands covered with rich, grassy vegetation and small freshwater ponds as well as some skerries and the surrounding sea. A rich grass vegetation covering the islands provides the basis for a sizable breeding colony of barnacle geese (Branta leucopsis). The islands are also important breeding locations for common eiders (Somateria mollissima) as well as for various other species of breeding waterbirds. The site is used as a study area with Ny-Ålesund, an international research station, located nearby. A small visitor centre informs about ongoing research activities.

2 - Data & location

2.1 - Formal data

211	Namo ar	nd address	e of the c	compilor	of this DI

Responsible compiler

Postal address Post box 5672 Torgarden, N-7485 Trondheim, Norway

National Ramsar Administrative Authority

Postal address Postboks 5672 Sluppen Trondheim Norway

2.1.2 - Period of collection of data and information used to compile the RIS

From year 1984

To year 2021

2.1.3 - Name of the Ramsar Site

Official name (in English, French or Spanish)

Kongsfjorden

2.1.4 - Changes to the boundaries and area of the Site since its designation or earlier update

(Update) A. Changes to Site boundary Yes O No

(Update) B. Changes to Site area

No change to area

(Update) For secretariat only. This update is an extension □

2.1.5 - Changes to the ecological character of the Site

(Update) 6b i. Has the ecological character of the Ramsar Site (including applicable Criteria) changed since the previous RIS?

2.2 - Site location

2.2.1 - Defining the Site boundaries

b) Digital map/image

<1 file(s) uploaded>

Former maps 0

Boundaries description

The boundary is the same as for the Kongsfjorden Nature Reserve established on July 1th 1973.

The site is composed of about 10 small islands and some skerries located in a western and eastern group, which lies about 3 km apart. Sea areas at a distance of 300 m from all islands and skerries at lowest tide are enclosed within the site.

2.2.2 - General location

a) In which large administrative region does the site lie?

Svalbard

b) What is the nearest town or population centre?

Longyearbyen

2.2.3 - For wetlands on national boundaries only

a) Does the wetland extend onto the territory of one or more other countries?

b) Is the site adjacent to another designated Ramsar Site on the territory of another Contracting Party?

2.2.4 - Area of the Site

Official area, in hectares (ha): 710

Area, in hectares (ha) as calculated from GIS boundaries

710.697

2.2.5 - Biogeography

Biogeographic regions

Regionalisation scheme(s)	Biogeographic region
EU biogeographic regionalization	2. Arctic
Other scheme (provide name below)	MATZ – middle arctic tundra zone

Other biogeographic regionalisation scheme

- 1. Zonal division based on the distribution of thermophilius vascular plant species. Vascular plants abundant on Svalbard are divided into five groups based on temperature demands and the distribution of these groups of species have been surveyed in 163 areas (In: Elvebakk, A. (1997): Tundra diversity and ecological characteristics of Svalbard. In: Wiegolaski, F.E. (ed.): Polar and alpine tundra. Ecosystems of the world 3: 347-359. Elsevier.
- 2. Biogeographical regions, Europe 2005, European Environment Agency, (http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/biogeographical-regions-europe-2005-with-national- boundaries)

3 - Why is the Site important?

3.1 - Ramsar Criteria and their justification

Criterion 1: Representative, rare or unique natural or near-natural wetland types

This is a small marine archipelago with shallow waters with numerous skerries and small islands. This is a typical archipelago for the west coast of Spitsbergen.

☑ Criterion 2 : Rare species and threatened ecological communities

Optional text box to provide further Kongsfjorden host species that are considered to be rare/threatened, such as the Barnacle goose (Ann. II information Berne Convention), the Arctic tern (Ann. Il Berne Convention) and the black-legged kittiwake (IUCN: VU).

Criterion 3 : Biological diversity

Justification

This group of islands and skerries are traditional breeding sites for barnacle geese, pink-footed geese and common eider, species characteristic for this kind of archipelago in this biogeographic region.

Criterion 4 : Support during critical life cycle stage or in adverse conditions

Optional text box to provide further The site hosts a sizable breeding colony of barnacle geese. Additionally, the islands are also important information breeding locations for common eiders as well as for various other species of breeding waterbirds.

☑ Criterion 6:>1% waterbird population

information

Optional text box to provide further This site regularly host more than 1% of the of the common eider population.

3.2 - Plant species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

<no data available>

3.3 - Animal species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Phylum	Scientific name		ual c	ifie: rite	cies s un rior 6	ider 1	und	er cı	cies outes riterion	Pop. Size	Period of pop. Es	st. occ	urrence	UCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	CMS Appendix I	Other Status	Justification
Others																		
CHORDATA/ MAMMALIA	Phoca vitulina	0		J										LC				An increasing population of this species
Birds	<u> </u>										_							
CHORDATA/ AVES	Anser brachyrhynchus	0]	J			√							LC				Criterion 3 & 4: This group of islands and skerries are traditional breeding sites for this species.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Arenaria interpres	0		J										LC				Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Branta leucopsis	G	7	J	V		V			1458	2009-2017		4.9	LC			Ann. Il Berne Convention, Emerald Network	350 pairs (2009). 716 nests (2016) and 729 nests (2017). Criterion 3 & 4: The site is a traditional breeding site for this species. Criterion 6: Biogeographic Region: Svalbard/Southwest Scotland
CHORDATA/ AVES	Fratercula arctica	G	1											VU				A few pairs have been observed breeding in the area recent years
CHORDATA / AVES	Gavia stellata	0		1										LC				Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Larus hyperboreus	G	7	1						242	2021			LC			Svalbard Red List: Considered as VU	121 pairs (2021). Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Larus marinus	0		1										LC				Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Phalaropus fulicarius	0		J										LC				Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA / AVES	Rissa tridactyla	9	1	1										VU				Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Somateria mollissima	0		J	¥		V			5234	2021		5	NT				2617 breeding pairs (2021). Criterion 3 & 4: The site is a traditional breeding sites for this species. Criterion 6: Biogeographic Region: borealis, Svalbard & Franz Joseph (bre)
CHORDATA/ AVES	Somateria spectabilis	G	2											LC			Ann. Il Berne Convention	Criterion 4: This species is occasionally observed in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA / AVES	Stercorarius Iongicaudus	G	1	1										LC			Svalbard Red List: VU	Criterion 4: This species breeds within this site.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Stercorarius parasiticus	0		J										LC				Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA/ AVES	Stercorarius skua	0		J														Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.
CHORDATA / AVES	Sterna paradisaea	Ģ	1	J										LC			Ann. Il Berne Convention	Criterion 4: This species annually breeds in Kongsfjorden.

¹⁾ Percentage of the total biogeographic population at the site

Population estimates on the Glaucous Gull and the Common Eider are from 'Miljøovervåking Svalbard og Jan Mayen' (www.MASJ.no).

Common eider: The common eider is the most numerous duck on Svalbard. The size of the breeding population is estimated to be between 13.500 and 27.500 pairs, and the total population in late summer (adults + yearlings) is estimated at 80.000–140.000 individuals (https://www.npolar.no/arter/aerfugl/). The population of the common eider corresponds to more than 1% of the population at Svalbard.

3.4 - Ecological communities whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

<no data available>

Optional text box to provide further information

Saxifraga species: Mainly moss tundra on a gradient from dry to wet types. Saxifraga species are important in all moss tundra vegetation types.

Poa: Patches of strongly manured vegetation such as this species (from nesting geese) are found.

Carex: Patches of strongly manured vegetation such as this species (from nesting geese) are found.

Festuca: Patches of strongly manured vegetation such as this species (from nesting geese) are found.

4 - What is the Site like? (Ecological character description)

4.1 - Ecological character

Situated in the Arctic and characterized by:

- Archipelago in the fiord zone with rock or sand/gravel dominated shores.
- · Grass vegetation and some small ponds. All vegetation found on these islands are influenced by seawater.
- The archipelago is normally icebound from mid-winter until May-June.

4.2 - What wetland type(s) are in the site?

Marine or coastal wetlands

Wetland types (code and name)	Local name	Ranking of extent (1: greatest - 4: least)	Area (ha) of wetland type	Justification of Criterion 1
A: Permanent shallow marine waters		1		Representative
D: Rocky marine shores		2		Representative
E: Sand, shingle or pebble shores		3		Representative

4.3 - Biological components

4.3.1 - Plant species

Other noteworthy plant species

Phylum	Scientific name	Position in range / endemism / other
TRACHEOPHYTA/MAGNOLIOPSIDA	Draba pauciflora	Svalbard Red List: Considered as NT
TRACHEOPHYTA/MAGNOLIOPSIDA	Draba subcapitata	Svalbard Red List Considered as NT
TRACHEOPHYTA/MAGNOLIOPSIDA	Dryas octopetala	Exposed ridge habitats on rocky outcrops and beach ridges with this species.
TRACHEOPHYTA/LILIOPSIDA	Puccinellia tenella	Svalbard Red List Considered as NT
TRACHEOPHYTA/MAGNOLIOPSIDA	Salix polaris	Exposed ridge habitats on rocky outcrops and beach ridges with this species.

4.3.2 - Animal species

<no data available>

4.4 - Physical components

4.4.1 - Climate

Climatic region	Subregion
E: Polar climate with extremely cold winters and summers	ET: Tundra (Polar tundra, no true summer)

The climate is characterised by low temperatures and low precipitation. Average temperature is 4,9°C in July. Annual average temperature is -6,3°C. Annual precipitation is 385 mm. The archipelago is normally icebound from mid-winter until May/June.

4.4.2 - Geomorphic setting

	0	elevation above sea level (in metres)	a) Mi
	41	elevation above sea level (in metres)	a) Ma
iver basin \square	Entire rive		
iver basin \square	Upper part of rive		
iver basin \square	Middle part of rive		
iver basin 🗹	Lower part of rive		

RIS for Site no. 315, K	Kongsfjorden, Norway		
	More than o	one river basin	
	No	tin river basin 🗖	
		Coastal 🗹	
Please name the river basin	n or basins. If the site lies in a	sub-basin, please also name	the larger river basin. For a coastal/marine site, please name the sea or ocean.
Norwegian Sea			
4.4.3 - Soil			
4.4.0 - 0011		Mineral 🗹	
	(Update) Changes		Increase O Decrease O Unknown O
		ole information	inclease of Declease of Chinician of
Are sail types subject to	change as a result of changin	a la dada dada	
	ons (e.g., increased salinity or		
Please provide further infor	mation on the soil (optional)		
			ly shores. The land areas consist of bare rock and some areas are
covered with marine o	deposits. The islands are	e grass-covered with sr	aali ponas.
4.4.4 - Water regime			
Water permanence			
Presence?	Changes at RIS update		
Usually permanent water present			
Source of water that maintain	us character of the site		
Presence?	Predominant water source	Changes at RIS update	
Water inputs from precipitation	✓	No change	
Marine water		No change	
Water destination			
Presence?	Changes at RIS update		
Marine	No change		
Stability of water regime Presence?	Changes at RIS update		
Water levels fluctuating	No change		
(including tidal)	onange		
Please add any comments	on the water regime and its de	eterminants (if relevant). Use	nis box to explain sites with complex hydrology:
	islands originates from p		
iviiddie iidai ampiitude	e is approx. 1,5 m (Long	yearbyen narbour).	
4.4.5 - Sediment regim	ne.		
Codiment regim		gime unknown 🗹	
	Sedifferitie	gine unknown 🖴	
4.4.6 - Water pH			
		Unknown 🗹	
4.4.7 - Water salinity			
	F	resh (<0.5 g/l) 🗹	
	(Update) Changes	at RIS update No change ©	Increase O Decrease O Unknown O
	Euhaline/Eusal	line (30-40 g/l) 🗹	
	(Update) Changes	at RIS update No change ©	Increase O Decrease O Unknown O
		Unknown	
4.4.8 - Dissolved or sus	spended nutrients in wat	er	
		Unknown 🗹	
Please provide further inform	mation on dissolved or susper	nded nutrients (optional):	
The surrounding sea a	areas are shallow and nu	trient rich	

i) broadly similar O ii) significantly different $oldsymbol{\Theta}$	Please describe whether, and if so how, the landscape and ecological characteristics in the area surrounding the Ramsar Site differ from the site itself:
	Surrounding area has greater urbanisation or development
∅	Surrounding area has higher human population density
	Surrounding area has more intensive agricultural use
	Surrounding area has significantly different land cover or habitat types
	Please describe other ways in which the surrounding area is different:

The site is situated only a few kilometers from Ny-Ålesund, which is now an international research station. In summer, a lot of cruise ships visit Ny-Ålesund and the areas just outside the borders of the sanctuary. There is also use of smaller boats for research and recreation in the area.

4.5 - Ecosystem services

4.5.1 - Ecosystem services/benefits

Provisioning Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Food for humans	Sustenance for humans (e.g., fish, molluscs, grains)	Medium
Wetland non-food products	Other	Medium

Regulating Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Hazard reduction	Coastal shoreline and river bank stabilization and storm protection	Medium

Cultural Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Scientific and educational	Major scientific study site	Medium
Scientific and educational	Important knowledge systems, importance for research (scientific reference area or site)	Medium

Other ecosystem service(s) not included above:

Harvest of eggs and eider down has been performed with various intensity in Svalbard from the 18th century and until today. Trappers using Kongsfjorden as hunting grounds have also collected eggs and eider down in this archipelago in the past. Collecting of Eider down is still practiced.

Some effect in shoreline stabilization

A lot of research and biodiversity monitoring have been conducted in the area. Researchers at the research station in Ny-Ålesund have used the reserve as a study area for many different studies.

There is no use of the Ramsar site for recreation/tourism. The regulations for the nature reserve ban visits from May 15th to August 15th because of the birds breeding season.

Have studies or assessments been made of the economic valuation of	Yes O No O Unknown	(6)
ecosystem services provided by this Ramsar Site?	100 - 110 - 011111101111	_

4.5.2 - Social and cultural values

i) the site provides a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland	
ii) the site has exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland	
iii) the ecological character of the wetland depends on its interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples	
iv) relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland	С

<no data available>

4.6 - Ecological processes

(ECD) Nutrient cycling Vegetational enrichment by bird guano

5 - How is the Site managed? (Conservation and management)

5.1 - Land tenure and responsibilities (Managers)

5.1.1 - Land tenure/ownership

		owners	
I UL	JIIC	OWITEIS	HIIP

Category	Within the Ramsar Site	In the surrounding area
National/Federal government	 ✓	 ✓

Provide further information on the land tenure / ownership regime (optional):

Within the Ramsar site: State owned (100%) In the surrounding area: State owned (100%)

5.1.2 - Management authority

Please list the local office / offices of any | The Governor of Svalbard agency or organization responsible for managing the site:

Sysselmesteren på Svalbard

Postal address: Pb. 633

N-9171 LONGYEARBYEN

E-mail address: firmapost@sysselmesteren.no

5.2 - Ecological character threats and responses (Management)

5.2.1 - Factors (actual or likely) adversely affecting the Site's ecological character

Human intrusions and disturbance

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site Changes I		In the surrounding area	Changes
Recreational and tourism activities	Medium impact	Medium impact		No change	✓	No change

Pollution

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Industrial and military effluents	Medium impact	Medium impact		No change	/	No change
Unspecified	Medium impact	Medium impact		No change	✓	No change

Please describe any other threats (optional):

In the surrounding area:

Increasing tourism and oil spill from ships is a possible threat.

5.2.2 - Legal conservation status

National legal designations			
Designation type	Name of area	Online information url	Overlap with Ramsar Site
Nature Reserve	Kongsfjorden		whole
bird sanctuary	Kongsfjorden		whole

Non-statutory designations

Designation type	Name of area	Online information url	Overlap with Ramsar Site
Important Bird Area	Inner parts of Kongsfjorden		partly

5.2.3 - IUCN protected areas categories (2008)

la Strict Nature Reserve

lb	Wilderness	Area: protected	area	managed	mainly for	wilderness	
						protection	

II National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation

I	Il Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features
ľ	V Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention
١	/ Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation
٧	/I Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems

5.2.4 - Key conservation measures

Legal protection

Measures	Status
Legal protection	Implemented

Other

There is an ambition to present a management plan in near future.

5.2.5 - Management planning

Is there a site-specific management plan for the site? In preparation

Has a management effectiveness assessment been undertaken for the site? Yes O No •

If the site is a formal transboundary site as indicated in section Data and location > Site location, are there shared management planning Yes O No opposesses with another Contracting Party?

Please indicate if a Ramsar centre, other educational or visitor facility, or an educational or visitor programme is associated with the site:

There is a small visitor's centre in Ny-Ålesund which is providing information about the nature and ongoing research in the area.

5.2.6 - Planning for restoration

Is there a site-specific restoration plan? No need identified

5.2.7 - Monitoring implemented or proposed

Monitoring	Status
Plant community	Implemented
Animal community	Implemented
Birds	Implemented

A lot of research and biodiversity monitoring have been conducted in the area. Researchers at the research station in Ny-Ålesund have used the reserve as study area for many different studies.

The population of common eider has been surveyed every year since the 1970s. The data is available in MOSJ (https://www.mosj.no/no/fauna/hav/)

6 - Additional material

6.1 - Additional reports and documents

6.1.1 - Bibliographical references

Alsos, I.G., Elvebakk, A. & Gabrielsen, G.W. 1998: Vegetation exploitation by barnacle geese Branta leucposus during incubation on Svalbard. Polar Research 17(1), 1-14.

Bangjord, G. (ed.) 1996. Pattedyr- og fugleregistreringer i Kongsfjordområdet sommeren 1996. Norsk Polarinstitutt, upubl.

Environmental monitoring of Svalbard and Jan Mayen - http://www.mosj.no/en/

Artsdatabanken (2021, 24. november). Norsk rødliste for arter 2021. https://www.artsdatabanken.no/lister/rodlisteforarter/2021

Prestrud, P. and Børset, A. 1984. Status of the goose populations in the bird sanctuaries in Svalbard. Norsk Polarinsitutt Skr. 181: 129-133.

Prestrud, P. and Mehlum, F. 1991: Population size and summer distribution of the Common Eider Somateria melissima in Svalbard 1981-1985. Norsk Polarinsitutt Skrifter 195. 9-20.

Tombre, I. M., Mehium, F. & Loonen, M. J. J. E. 1998: The Kongsfjorden colony of barnacle geese: Nest distribution and the use of breeding islands 1980-1997. pp. 57-455 in Mehlum, F., Black, J.M. & Madsen,

J. (eds.): Research on Arctic Geese. Proceedings of the Svalbard Goose Symposium, Oslo, Norway, 23-26 September 1997. Norsk Polarinstitutt Skrifter 200. (Link: http://www.maartenloonen.nl/literatuur/nps200-057- tombre.pdf)

6.1.2 - Additional reports and documents

i. taxonomic lists of plant and animal species occurring in the site (see section 4.3)

ii. a detailed Ecological Character Description (ECD) (in a national format)

iii. a description of the site in a national or regional wetland inventory

iv. relevant Article 3.2 reports

<no file available>

v. site management plan

vi. other published literature

<no data available>

6.1.3 - Photograph(s) of the Site

Please provide at least one photograph of the site



(Norwegian Polar 26-10-2017)



eiders (Pernille Kvernland 14-07-2016)



Common eiders (F



Ny-Ålesund, the closest settlement, with a view of Kongsfjorden (Pernille Kvernland, 14-07-2016)



Terretorial Arctic tern (2016)



Nesting female eider (Pernille Kvernland, 14-07



Glaucous gull nest (Pen nland, 14-07-2016)



Multiple female eiders nesting, blending into the environment (Pernille Kvernland, 14-07-2016)



14-07-2016





Glaoucous gull chick 2016)





Great skua nest (Pernille



Arctic tern "nest" (Pernille

6.1.4 - Designation letter and related data

Designation letter

<1 file(s) uploaded>

Date of Designation 1985-07-24