

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:

30-01-1997

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Islamic Republic of Iran

3. Name of wetland: Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon and mouth of Sefid Rud

4. Geographical coordinates: 37°25'N 49°29'E

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.) 25 m below sea level

6. Area: (in hectares) 500 ha

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

A shallow sea bay (formerly brackish lagoon), associated freshwater and brackish marshes and the nearby riverine marshes at the mouth of the Sefid Rud in the south-west Caspian. There are also open grassy areas and dunes near the mouth of the river. The site is important as spawning and nursery grounds for fishes, and as breeding, staging and wintering areas for a wide variety of waterfowl.

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: A Sp Tp F M E

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: 2c

10. Map of site included? Please tick **yes** -or- **no** map is of situation before 1978!!

(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:

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).

1a: Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon and the Mouth of Sefid Rud are good representative examples of natural wetlands characteristic of the South Caspian Lowlands.

2a: The wetlands provide important wintering habitat for *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, a globally threatened species, and formerly supported a wintering flock of *Pelecanus crispus*.

2c: The lagoon is an important breeding and nursery ground for various fish species, and supports large breeding colonies of several species of waterfowl.

3c: The wetlands regularly support over 1% of the regional Middle East breeding population of *Phalacrocorax carbo*, and over 1% of the regional wintering populations of *Podiceps nigricollis*, *Anas platyrhynchos* and *Larus ridibundus*.

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

The wetland is located in the Province of Gilan, about 40 km east of Bandar Anzali and 15 km north-west of the town of Rasht. Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon lies immediately to the east of the mouth of the Sefid Rud River.

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)

The wetland comprises a shallow sea bay (formerly an enclosed lagoon), nearby the mouth of the main channel of the Sefid Rud, and the associated fresh to brackish marshes. The Sefid Rud is the second largest river in Iran, with a catchment area of 54,000 sq. km. The main channel of the river enters the Caspian Sea at Bandar Kiashahr.

Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon (formerly Bandar Farahnaz) was formed in 1960 as a result of the falling level of the Caspian Sea. Since 1978 a rise back in sea level has obliterated the sand barrier between the lagoon and the sea, with the result that now the wetland constitutes of a sea bay with broad entrance to the sea (as in the 1950s). The marshy grasslands and sand dune areas at the mouth of Sefid Rud have remained more or less unchanged, while new wetland habitats have been created to the west of the river mouth.

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

no special hydrological values known

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

Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon is a bay with broad entrance to the sea. At the mouth of Sefid Rud there are marshy grasslands and sand dunes. The lagoon supports relatively little other vegetation than algae. Freshwater marshes at the extreme west end of the lagoon support some beds of *Phragmites* and *Typha*, while the southern and eastern shores are dominated by *Juncus* and grasses. Sandy areas to the west and north-west are covered in shrub and grassland which give way to sand-dune vegetation near the Caspian shore. Grassland along the banks of Sefid Rud floods seasonally.

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

There are beds of *Phragmites*, *Typha*, *Juncus* and different kinds of grasses in the marshes. In the lagoon a lot of algae are growing.

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

The area is an important staging and wintering area for a wide variety of migratory waterfowl, notably grebes, *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, ducks, shorebirds, gulls and terns, and for *Circus aeruginosus* and *Falco columbarius*. The open grassy areas and dunes near the river mouth provide breeding habitat for *Glareola pratincola*, while a small patch of woodland to the south of the lagoon supports a large colony of herons and egrets. The bird *Ixobrychus minutus* is a passage migrant or summer visitor. A list with some counting results for waterbirds is attached.

The golden jackal (*Canis aureus*) is common to the area.

19. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)

no information available

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site: National Government

(b) surrounding area: public tenure

21. Current land use:

(a) site: Grazing of livestock, reed-cutting and wildfowl hunting (both for sport and recreation) occur. The lagoon is an important centre for commercial fishing, and there is a large fisheries station on the south shore.

(b) surroundings/catchment: fishing and some fishing settlements. Land to the south of the wetland is mostly under cultivation, although there are some relict patches of *Alnus* woodland near the wetland that support colonies of herons and egrets.

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

(a) at the site: Between 1960 and 1978 Bandar Kiashahr used to be a real lagoon, with fresh to brackish water and a very narrow opening to the sea. Before and after that period the sea level was higher and therefore the lagoon was, and is, more like a small bay. Disturbances at the site at the moment are heavy hunting pressure on waterfowl throughout the winter, and passing of many boats due to extensive fishing activities and its cooperating industries and transport. There is also considerable disturbance from recreation activities during weekends and holidays. The disappearance of the wintering flock of *Pelecanus crispus* in the late 1970s and the great decrease in the numbers of other wintering fowl in the last decade have been attributed to the increasing disturbance from fishing activities and heavy hunting pressure.

(b) around the site: no information available

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)

Besides Ramsar status there are no other national or international designations applicable to this wetland.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

no conservation measures proposed.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)

A considerable amount of fisheries research has been carried out by the National Fisheries Organisation (Shilot). Annual mid-winter waterfowl censuses have been carried out by the Ornithology Unit of the Department of the Environment since 1968.

26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)
no information available

27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)
The wetland is used for recreational purposes during weekends and holidays.

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)

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

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

Most other publications describe the situation between 1960 and 1978 when the lagoon was a freshwater lagoon instead of a sea bay.

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**List of bird species including counting results
Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon and mouth of Sefid Rud**

waterfowl:

- globally threatened species

<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>	300
<i>Pelecanus crispus</i> (until 1980)	35
<i>Anser erythropus</i> (not recent)	10
<i>Branta ruficollis</i> (1973)	1
<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i> (1972)	3

- 1% or more of population

<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	340 w
<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	340 w
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	2000 br, 1000 w
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	400 br
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	60 br
<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	644 w
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	120 w
<i>Cygnus olor</i>	270 w
<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	24 w
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	130 w
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	12,400 w
<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	112 w
<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	40-60 br
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	3,500 w
<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	3,500 w
<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	1000 w

other birds:

<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	max 5
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all counts single birds

w = wintering

br = breeding

source: Evans, 1994