

## ***URAL RIVER DELTA AND NEAREST CASPIAN SEA COASTAL ZONE, Kazakhstan***

**DATE OF SUBMISSION:** 3.05.2007

**COUNTRY:** Kazakhstan

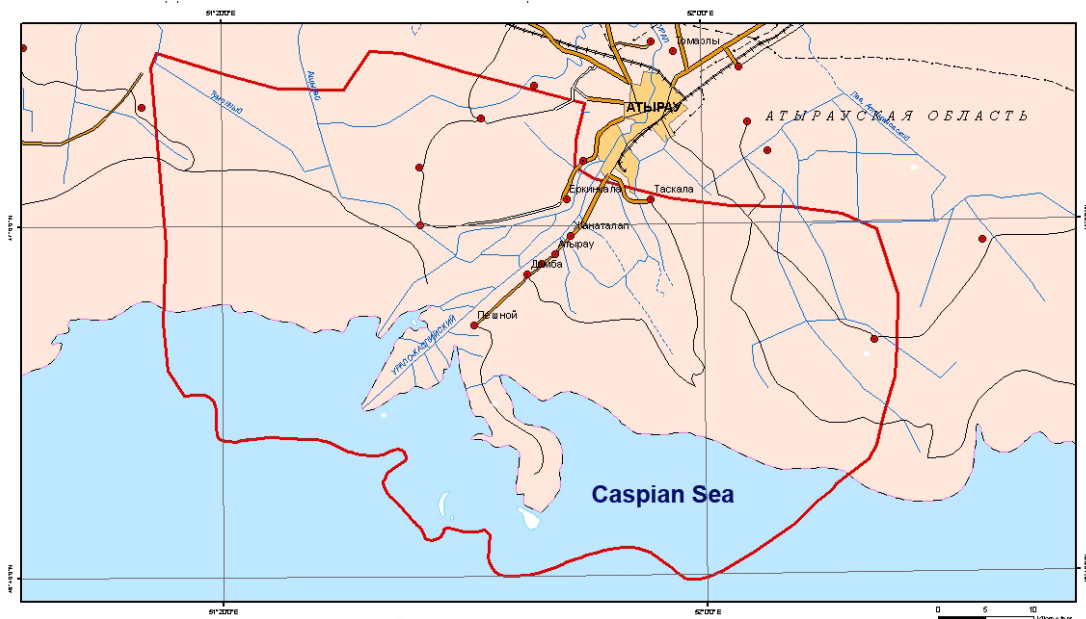
**NAME OF SITE:** Ural River Delta and Nearest Caspian Sea Coastal Zone

**GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES:** 46°45' E; 51°50' N

**ALTITUDE:** min – 29.0 m and max – 26.5 m below sea level

**AREA:** contemporary Ural River delta's area is about 60 000 ha, the sea level is 28 m below sea level. The depth of the water in the river bed is 1.5 - 3 m, and in some places it may increase temporarily up to 7 m, while at the same time the ground area of the delta reduces by 50%.

**MAP:**



**OVERVIEW:** This site is a freshwater system of river channels and lakes between the channels of various size with a dominant depth of 1.5-3.0 m. On the site there is avantdelta, resulting in sea water area with the depth of up to 2.5-3.5 m, the water is slightly-saline. There is a group of coastal peninsulas and Peshnoy, Zyuydestova and Nordostova Shalygi Sea Islands. The level of water is subject to seasonal changes, caused by rundown-and-back processes under the influence of the winds, and also to some longstanding changes, in accordance with the general fluctuation of the level of the Caspian Sea – its transgression and regression. In the delta area the inter channel parts of land and shoals overgrow abundantly with reed and cattail, on the higher places there is some border shrubby and woody vegetation.

Ural River Delta and the adjacent coast of Caspian Sea come as the most important places on the Caspian coast site for mass nesting of *Pelecaniformes*, *Ciconiformes*, *Anscriformes*, *Rallidae* and *Charadriiformes*, including rare, especially protected species. During summer-autumn period there are flocks of many thousands of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*), dabbling and diving ducks, Eurasian coots (*Fulica atra*), gulls, terns and sandpipers, spending there

the period of their molting and stopping there during migration. Besides water birds, there are various species of fish inhabiting the local reservoirs, including Sturgeons (*Acipenseridae*), some species of Amphibians and Reptilians, on the land there are mammals, such as Musk Rat (*Ondatra zibethica*), Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*), Raccoon Dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), sometimes it is possible to see European Minks (*Mustela lutreola*) and Marbled Polecats (*Vormela peregusna*). Regularly Caspian Seals (*Phoca caspica*) from the seaward visit the channels of the delta.

## **WCASN CRITERION AND QUALIFIERS**

### **Criterion 1: Site's Importance for Siberian Crane**

**Sub-criterion 1.3:** *The site is historical habitat of the Siberian Crane, but there are less than five records during the last 50 years.*

In the past (the end of 19th to the beginning of 20th century) the site was a stop-over location for single birds and small groups of Siberian Cranes during the spring and autumn migrations. At present, according to some information received from the locals, requiring verification and confirmation, Siberian Cranes stop on the site very rarely during the autumn migration (not more than one register per 10 years).

**Qualifier 1:** Site's importance for other crane species: the site is important for other crane species when it is known to support a total of 25 or more migratory cranes (which can be of more than one species) at any stage of their life cycle (e.g., breeding, migration stop-over (staging), non-breeding birds (wintering), etc.).

On the adjacent desert territories of the site (northeastern edge of the delta by the coast) 2 - 5 pairs of Demoiselle Cranes (*Anthropoides virgo*) nest annually.

### **Qualifier 2: Site's importance for other waterbird species**

**Sub-qualifier 2.1:** *The site regularly supports 20,000 or more migratory waterbirds during migration periods.*

On the Ural River Delta and nearby territories there are 103 species of waterbirds registered, and they are the representatives of the following orders: *Gaviiformes*, *Podicipediformes*, *Pelecaniformes*, *Ciconiiformes*, *Phoenicopteriformes*, *Anseriformes*, *Cruiformes*, and *Charadriiformes*. During migrations most numerous are Eurasian Coots (*Fulica atra*) – up to 80,000 birds, Common Teals (*Anas crecca*) and Gagarneys (*Anas querquedula*) – 40,000 – 6,000 birds, Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) – 45,000 birds (not less than 20% of the western Caspian population), Red-crested Pochards (*Netta rufina*) – 20,000 birds, and the Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) – up to 15,000 birds. General numbers of these species during the period of molting, according to the observations, can reach here about 30,000 – 50,000 birds.

**Sub-qualifier 2.2:** *The site regularly supports 5,000 or more migratory waterbirds or 0.25% of a migratory waterbird population on a single count during a single migration period.*

During the autumn migration in 2006 (the first week of October) there were registered 98,000 water birds of 24 species, during the spring migration in 2007 – 63,000 waterbirds of 18 species on the site.

**Sub-qualifier 2.3:** *The site regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of endangered migratory waterbird.*

There is a group of especially protected nesting species – Dalmation Pelican (*Pelicanus crispus*) – 250 pairs (over 1% of the world population of the species), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) - up to 350 pairs (not less than 10% of the Caspian population), Little Egret (*Egretta garzeta*) – 150 pairs, Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*) – 10 pairs, White-headed

Duck (*Oxiura leucocephala*) – up to 20 pairs, Great Black-headed Gull (*Larus ichthyæetus*) – up to 250 pairs (over 1 % of the world population of the species).

**Sub-qualifier 2.4:** *The site supports migratory waterbird species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.*

During the period of molting, there are up to 15,000 Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*), over 20,000 Common Teals (*Anas crecca*) and Gagarneys (*Anas querquedula*) and over 10,000 Eurasian Coots (*Fulica atra*) gathered on the site.

#### **WETLAND TYPES (according to Ramsar classification):**

##### **Marine/Coastal**

- A** Permanent shallow marine waters in most cases less than six metres deep at low tide; includes sea bays and straits.
- E** Sand, shingle or pebble shores; includes sand bars, spits and sandy islets; includes dune systems and humid dune slacks.
- H** Intertidal marshes; includes salt marshes, salt meadows, saltings, raised salt marshes; includes tidal brackish and freshwater marshes.

##### **Inland Wetlands**

- L** Permanent inland deltas.
- M** Permanent rivers/streams/creeks; includes waterfalls.
- O** Permanent freshwater lakes (over 8 ha); includes large oxbow lakes.

#### **JURISDICTION:**

**a) territorial jurisdiction:** Kazakhstan, Atyrauskaya Region, Balykshynsky District

**b) functional jurisdiction:** Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Address: 25, Abay Prospect, Astana. Tel/Fax: +7 (3172) 32-82-33.

**MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY:** Atyrau Regional Society of Hunters and Fishermen, 38. Pugachyova Str., Atyrau; Head - Yesen T. Taskenbayev; Vice-Chairman - Borankul Shartanov

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