



Albania designates its share of Lake Shkodra

7 February 2006

Albania



The Secretariat is pleased to announce that Albania's Ministry of Environment has placed the Albanian portion of a valuable transboundary wetland system onto the List of Wetlands of International Importance. As described by Ramsar's Dorothea August, Lake Shkodra and River Buna site (49,562 hectares, centered at 40°52'N 019°22'E) comprises the eastern side of the largest lake in the Balkan Peninsula, shared with Serbia and Montenegro (Skadarsko Jezero Ramsar site), as well as the River Buna with its near natural delta on the East Adriatic coast. The area includes a variety of habitats: freshwater, brackish water, woodland, freshwater marshes, wet pastures, sandy shore and rocky habitats supporting about 900-1000 plant species. Connection with the River Drin ensures the migration of mainly fish species from the Adriatic via Shkodra Lake to and from Ohrid and Prespa Lakes, such as the endangered *Acipenser stellatus* and *Salmothymus obtusirostris* as well as the critically endangered species *Acipenser studio* and *Chondrostoma scodrensis*. The site hosts about 25,000 wintering waterbirds, amongst them the endangered *Oxyura leucocephala* and the critically endangered *Numenius tenuirostris*. Threats arise from past and present practices of drainage for agriculture, uncontrolled development, changes in water regime, deforestation, illegal hunting and fishing, and introduced species. Shkodra (Skadar, Scutari) is known for its cultural heritage of more than 2000 years, e.g. the Illyrian walls and the ruins of a 600-year-old catholic church. Today the main activities are agriculture, stock raising, fishing and tourism.

Albania now has three Ramsar sites, with Butrint and Karavasta Lagoon, covering a surface area of 83,062 hectares.

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