Croatia designates Vransko Lake

4 February 2013

Croatia

The Secretariat is very pleased to report that Croatia has designated its 5th Wetland of International Importance, Vransko Lake ("Vransko jezero") (5,748 hectares, 43°53.28”N 015°34.36”E), a Nature Park and Special Ornithological Reserve that is the largest natural lake in Croatia. As summarized by Ramsar’s Assistant Advisor for Europe, Laura Máiz-Tomé, the lake is situated in a shallow karst bed and separated from the Adriatic Sea by a narrow karst ridge. Significant seasonal variations in water level and changes in salinity due to intrusion of sea water through permeable karst create conditions for development of very specific habitats. The shallowest northwest part of the site is characterized by reedbeds, floodplain and seasonally flooded arable land; the hills lining the eastern coast are covered by typical Mediterranean macchia and garrigue, while the lower western coast gives a more rocky appearance.

Vransko Lake marsh remains of what used to be a much larger Vrana swamp, drained by melioration canals in the 18th century. The site is a nesting, wintering and resting area for many threatened waterbirds, such as the *Ardea purpurea*, *Egretta alba* and *Porzana pusilla*. The lake is the biggest reservoir of fresh water in this region of Croatia. During rainy season the marsh regulates floods, and the reedbeds are excellent in purifying waters that enter the lake through melioration canals, carrying fertilizers that could enhance the lake eutrophication. A management plan (2010) for the Nature Park is being implemented.

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