



# Kazakhstan names two arid steppe lake systems

3 September 2009

Kazakhstan

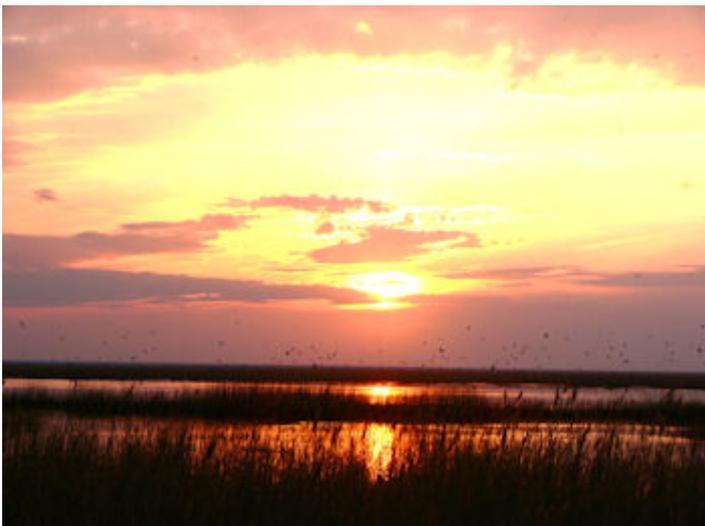


The Secretariat is very pleased to announce that the Republic of Kazakhstan has designated a

further two steppe lake systems as Wetlands of International Importance, both of them enormously significant areas particularly for migratory waterbirds. One of them is part of the "Saryarka – Steppe and Lakes of Northern Kazakhstan" World Heritage natural property, and both are part of the [West/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds](#) under the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species. Both of the new sites are in the Kostanay Oblast or province, and both designations are effective as of 12 July 2009. Ramsar's Assistant Advisor for Asia-Oceania, Ann Aldersey, has prepared brief site descriptions based on the Ramsar Information Sheets that accompanied the designations.

Kazakhstan presently has six Ramsar sites covering a surface area of 712,105 hectares.

The Naurzum Lake System (139,714 hectares, 51o32'N 064o26'E), part of the Saryarka World Heritage Site, is system of approximately 26 lakes in northern Kazakhstan and a near natural example of an Asian steppes-region wetland with outstanding importance for birds. The Lakes' cyclic hydrologic regime provides seasonal and annual diversity of fresh to saline habitats, including for the Critically Endangered Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) and 23 other threatened species, notably significant percentages of Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) and Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) populations. It is a site of mass moulting for ducks and swans, nesting for 158 species, and an important stop for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. It regularly supports more than 1% of 20 species of waterbirds. Flooding on average every 12-15 years, the Lake System is important for sustaining groundwater levels in the region. There is a management plan for the site, and it lies within a protected zone with limited access except for scientific research. Ramsar site no. 1872. Most recent RIS information: 2009.



The Zharsor-Urkash Lake System (41,250 hectares, 51o22'N

062o48'E) is a system of approximately 14 lakes characteristic of the arid steppe province in northern Kazakhstan. Consisting of both saline and freshwater permanent or intermittent lakes and wet marsh habitat, the site is a regular stopping site of the Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) and habitat for 16 threatened bird species. It supports appreciable numbers of White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) and Common Crane (*Grus grus*), as well as Little Stints (*Calidris minuta*) and Curlew Sandpipers (*C. ferruginea*) along shorelines. It is an important migratory stopover for a large number of waterbirds – dominated by Anseriformes and Limicolae – and nesting habitat for 79 species. Mammals are represented by 27 species, including the Critically Endangered Saiga Antelope (*Saiga tatarica*). Land use at the site

includes hayfields, pasture, small-scale salt production, and limited hunting. Steppe fires are a threat to the ecological character of the lakes. Ramsar site no. 1873. Most recent RIS information: 2009.

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