Ukraine designates two new Ramsar Sites

19 December 2016

Ukraine has two new Wetlands of International Importance, both in the north-western Rivnenska Oblast.

Syra Pogonia Bog (Ramsar Site no. 2274) is a large, well preserved marsh area in one of the most waterlogged parts of Europe’s continental biogeographic region. Its hills and wetter depressions are unique in Ukraine and Central Europe, as they are more characteristic of northern taiga wetlands, with oligotrophic communities of pine, sphagnum mosses, cottongrass, sedges and pod grass.

The Site supports over 600 native plant species and 675 animal species and is an important breeding ground for many waterbirds. Some of these are of national importance, such as the Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata*, European roller *Coracias garrulus* and western capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*. The Site represents a relict boreal refuge for insects and supports rare boreal butterfly species such as *Oeneis jutta*.

The wetland plays an important role in flood protection and in maintaining hydrological regimes; however the clearing and excavation of melioration channels in the surrounding areas every 10 to 15 years cause a sharp outflow of water. The Site provides important revenue for local communities, who collect berries within the Site and in adjacent areas. The Rivnensky Nature Reserve of which the Site is a part has an education centre, and organizes annual events focused on the importance of environmental conservation and the value of bogs including the wetlands of the Syra Pogonia Bog.

Somyne Swamps (Site no. 2275) is one of the best-preserved peatlands in the country. The main area of the Site is a large swamp with sedge and sphagnum dominating and sparse forest growth. Other habitats include a lake and a small number of eutrophic swamps, and alder and pine forest swamps. The bog is one of the biggest in the Polesia region of Eastern Europe. It is almost unchanged by land drainage which took place during the Soviet era, and it plays an important role in maintaining the hydrological regime of a large region of western Polesia.
The Site is critically important for wetland, forest and meadow ecosystems and for the biodiversity which they host, including large number of rare species. It provides habitats for over 780 native plant species and 580 animal species, including 89 species protected nationally and internationally. The globally threatened greater spotted eagle *Aquila clanga* regularly breeds on the Site, using small forested islands for nesting and surrounding bogs for feeding. The Site also serves as an important breeding habitat for other wetland-dependent bird species, including the common crane, wood sandpiper *Tringa glareola* and great grey owl *Strix nebulosa*.

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