

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

1998

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DD	MM	YY

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Australia

3. Name of wetland:

The Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert
Wetland, South Australia

4. Geographical coordinates:

Latitude: (approx.) 35° 18'S to 36° 33'S.; Longitude: (approx.) 138° 46'E to 139° 50'E.

5. Altitude:

Sea level.

6. Area:

Total Area - 140,500 ha. (approx.)

7. Overview:

The Coorong is a long, shallow saline to hypersaline lagoon more than 100 km in length that is separated from the Southern Ocean by a narrow sand dune peninsula. The Lakes Alexandrina and Albert form the mouth of the River Murray and are comprised of fresh to brackish/saline waters.

Wetlands specifically included are :

- Lake Alexandrina including Tolderol, Mud Islands and Currency Creek Game Reserves, otherwise mainly Crown Lands. 76,000 ha.

- Lake Albert. Mainly Crown Lands. 16,800 ha.

- Coorong - mainly covering Coorong National Park and Game Reserve, otherwise mainly Crown Lands. 47,700 ha.

8. Wetland Type:

marine-coastal: A B C D E F G H I J K

inland: L **M** N **O** P **Q** R Sp Ss Tp Ts

U Va Vt W Xf Xp Y Zg Zk

man-made: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. Ramsar Criteria:

1a 1b 1c 1d | 2a 2b 2c 2d | 3a 3b 3c | 4a 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

10. Map of site included? Please tick *yes* -or- *no*.

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.

13. General location:

The mouth of the Murray River, South Australia

14. Physical features:

The Lakes Alexandrina and Albert form a natural wetland system with associated shoreline marshes at the mouth of the River Murray and are connected with the Coorong - a long, narrow wetland complex extending from the Murray Mouth to parallel coastal dunes and consisting of saline marshes, samphire, freshwater soaks and open water with a hypersaline area at the southern end. The area also contains a number of ephemeral salt lakes and examples of ephemeral carbonate lakes of national and international significance.

15. Hydrological values:

Not applicable.

16. Ecological features:

The wetland consists of ocean beach, together with the mouth of the River Murray and associated lakes and estuaries. This combination provides a wide range of habitats from freshwater to hypersaline which are mostly in a natural state.

There is a diversity of species with waders and waterfowl predominating. The 1981 count of the Australasian Wader Studies Group of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union estimated the summer population of waders for the area at 122,000, compared with a South Australian population of 200,000 and an Australian population of 403,000.

Common species included:

Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>C. ferruginea</i>
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>C. acuminata</i>
Banded Stilt	<i>Cladorhynchus leucocephalus</i>
Red-capped Plover	<i>Charadrius ruficapillus</i>

Other species included:

Red-necked Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra novaehollandiae</i>
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularula</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Masked Lapwing	<i>Vanellus miles</i>
Pied Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>

Lesser Golder Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>
Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Hooded Plover	<i>Charadrius rubricollis</i>
Red-kneed Dotterel	<i>Erythrogonys cinctus</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Sooty Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>

Accurate counts of waterfowl are not available, however, in 1982 it was estimated that there were 45,000 ducks in the area. Spectacular numbers of Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) are present at times and H.J. Frith estimated 50,000 in the Coorong in 1957. Typical numbers for the whole wetland would be in excess of 5,000. Approximately 2,000 Cape Barren Geese (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*), normally summer within 1 km of the wetland. The area also supports large numbers of Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*), Pacific Black Duck (*A. superciliosa*) and Australian Shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*) with lesser numbers of:

Hardhead	<i>Aythya australis</i>
Chestnut Teal	<i>Anas castanea</i>
Australasian Shoveler	<i>A. rhynchotis</i>
Maned Duck	<i>Chenonetta jubata</i>
Pink-eared Duck	<i>Malacorhynchus membranaceus</i>
Musk Duck	<i>Biziura lobata</i>
Blue-billed Duck	<i>Oxyura australis</i>
Freckled Duck	<i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>

Other common waterbird species include:

Silver Gull	<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bergii</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Australian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Pied Cormorant	<i>P. varius</i>
Little Black Cormorant	<i>P. sulcirostris</i>
Little Pied Cormorant	<i>P. melanoleucos</i>
Straw-necked Ibis	<i>Threskiornis spinicollis</i>
Sacred Ibis	<i>T. aethiopicus</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Royal Spoonbill	<i>Platalea regia</i>
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	<i>P. flavipes</i>
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Hoary-headed Grebe	<i>Poliiocephalus poliocephalus</i>
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Welcome Swallow	<i>Hirundo neoxena</i>
Fairy Martin	<i>Cecropis ariel</i>

Many other species are present in lesser numbers, including the endangered Orange-bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) which over-winters on the reserve.

17. Noteworthy flora:

The Coorong contains endemic plant communities of musk grass (*Lamprothomium populosum*).

18. Noteworthy fauna:

The Coorong is an important breeding area for the Pelican, Crested Tern and Fairy Tern, and Lake Alexandrina for egrets, ibises, cormorants and the Rufous Night Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*).

19. Social and cultural values:

The area is valued for its conservation - scenic attributes and is used for outdoor recreational pursuits including: wildlife observation and studies and recreational fishing and hunting. Professional fishing occurs both along the beach and in parts of the wetland complex. The area and particularly the Coorong, is noted for its extensive aboriginal (traditional and archaeological), historic and geological sites.

Note: some of the northern islands within the Coorong lagoon are not part of the Coorong National Park or Game Reserve but are reserved for use by Aboriginal people.

20. Land tenure/ownership:

The area is mostly Crown Land (water) and National Park and Game Reserves. Lakes Alexandrina and Albert are surrounded mainly by private property. The Coorong is surrounded mainly by National Park and Game Reserve.

21. Current land use:

- (a) **on site:** Conservation, recreation: camping, boating, duck hunting (not over entire area; in game reserve only).
- (b) **surroundings/catchment:** grazing and light farming in adjacent areas.

Most of the edge of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert is used for farming, with tourist development in several areas. Development is otherwise restricted under the State Planning and other Acts and most of the area is in its natural state.

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

Increased salinity due to lack of peak flows from the Murray River as a result of water controls and potential salinization associated with regional land clearance and drainage schemes.

23. Conservation measures taken:

The Coorong is reserved as a National Park and Game Reserve. A management plan has been prepared for the Coorong and is implemented.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

None.

25. Current scientific research and facilities:

The South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service maintains on-going monitoring of the habitats and wildlife associated with the Coorong and adjacent areas in accordance with objectives established in the Plan of Management.

26. Current conservation education:

The South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has a visitor centre at the Coorong and rangers are on site to provide information and interpretation programs.

27. Current recreation and tourism:

The wetlands and adjoining areas are used for outdoor recreation and research purposes. It is estimated that the area under the park reserve receives in excess of 200,000 visitor days per year and activities include: boating, fishing, camping, walking and wildlife observation. Access to important wetland sites - particularly waterbird breeding areas - is restricted.

28. Jurisdiction:

Government of South Australia

29. Management authority:

South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service
GPO Box 1782
ADELAIDE SOUTH AUSTRALIA 5001

30. Bibliographical references:

South Australia National Parks and Wildlife Service (1988). Coorong National Park and Coorong Game Reserve Management Plan. Department of Environment and Planning, Adelaide.

Note: The National Parks and Wildlife Service maintains an extensive bibliography and reference collection of resource information of the Coorong.
