

Designation date: 31/05/12 Ramsar Site no. 2053

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)– 2009-2012 version

Available for download from http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm.

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 14, 3rd edition). A 4th edition of the Handbook is in preparation and will be available in 2009.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

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

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

May 30 2012

3. Country:

Faroe Islands, Denmark

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

The precise name of the designated site in one of the three official languages (English, French or Spanish) of the Convention. Alternative names, including in local language(s), should be given in parentheses after the precise name.

Skuvoy (Skúvoy and Skúgvoy)

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for (tick one box only):

- a) Designation of a new Ramsar site; or
b) Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area

The Ramsar site boundary and site area are unchanged:

or

If the site boundary has changed:

- i) the boundary has been delineated more accurately ; or
ii) the boundary has been extended ; or
iii) the boundary has been restricted**

and/or

If the site area has changed:

- i) the area has been measured more accurately ; or
ii) the area has been extended ; or
iii) the area has been reduced**

** **Important note:** If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

7. Map of site:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps, including digital maps.

a) A map of the site, with clearly delineated boundaries, is included as:

- i) a hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): ;
ii) an electronic format (e.g. a JPEG or ArcView image) ;
iii) a GIS file providing geo-referenced site boundary vectors and attribute tables .

b) Describe briefly the type of boundary delineation applied:

e.g. the boundary is the same as an existing protected area (nature reserve, national park, etc.), or follows a catchment boundary, or follows a geopolitical boundary such as a local government jurisdiction, follows physical boundaries such as roads, follows the shoreline of a waterbody, etc.

The Ramsar Site covers the entire island of Skúvoy and it extends from the shores of the island 500 m out into the Sea.

8. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude, in degrees and minutes):

Provide the coordinates of the approximate centre of the site and/or the limits of the site. If the site is composed of more than one separate area, provide coordinates for each of these areas.

61° 46' 11" N, 6° 49' 46" W

61°46'19"N, 6°49'34"W

9. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s) the site lies and the location of the nearest large town.

Skúvoy is west of the island Sandoy, in the southern part of the archipelago. A village with the same name is on the east site with 43 inhabitants. The island has rugged coasts, steep cliffs on the west side, boulder-screes, and coastal grass slopes. Land-uses include sheep-grazing. Two mountain peaks are on the island: Knútur (392 m) and Heyggjurin Mikli (391 m).

10. Elevation:(in metres: average and/or maximum & minimum)

The altitudes on the island are between 0-392 m. Further marine areas are included to 500 m from the shores, which are mostly including marine water extending 6 m depths.

11. Area:(in hectares)

1,790 ha (Ramsar site) 1,250 ha (Skúvoy island)

12. General overview of the site:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

The Ramsar site at Skúvoy comprises grassy slopes and sea cliffs, which provides the breeding habitat for large concentrations of seabirds. It hosts the Faroese largest colony of Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* with 96,000 attending Common Guillemots in 2009 and 12,000 pairs of Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (Bergur Olsen unpublished). Other seabirds in important numbers include Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* with an estimated 50,000 pairs, Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* with an estimated 40,000 pairs, European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* with an estimated 20,000 pairs and Manx Shearwater with an estimated 10,000 pairs (Grimmet and Jones 1989). In 2010 the Great Skua *Catharacta skua* was breeding with 145 pairs and the Arctic skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* with 55 pairs (Olsen 2011a).

13. Ramsar Criteria:

Tick the box under each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11). All Criteria which apply should be ticked.

1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5	•	6	•	7	•	8	•	9
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14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Criteria 2: The seabird community at Skúvoy (species listed under Ann. II or III of the Berne Convention) is at risk from climate related ecological changes, which may have disrupted the food web of marine birds in North Atlantic waters. Thus comprehensive and complex changes seem to happen in the surrounding marine ecosystem (Frederiksen 2010). For bird species

information see point 12 and 22. The European Storm Petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*) and Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* are also listed under Ann. I of the EU Birds Directive.

Criteria 3: The Skúvoy population of 96,000 attending Common Guillemots in 2009 (Bergur Olsen unpublished) is the largest on the Faroese Islands and the population comprises a significant proportion of that species adapted to the special environment of the North Atlantic and a species that are particularly characteristic for the temperate North Atlantic Biogeographic Region. Skúvoy also contains the largest known population of an estimated minimum 10,000 individuals of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* in the Faroe Islands (Grimmet and Jones 1989).

Criteria 4: Skúvoy provides critical habitat for populations of especially Common Guillemot, Northern Fulmar, Black-legged Kittiwake, Atlantic Puffin, European Storm-petrel, Manx Shearwater and the other seabirds during the critical breeding cycle where large concentrations are gathered in very small areas on grassy slopes, in sea cliffs and on the sea.

Criteria 5: Skúvoy contains an estimated 280,000 pairs of seabirds (BirdLife 2004) comprising most notably the Common Guillemot (96,000 birds) and the Northern Fulmar 50,000 pairs, Atlantic Puffin 40,000 pairs, Black-legged Kittiwake 12,000 pairs, European Storm-petrel 20,000 pairs and Manx Shearwater among others. However, Common Guillemots and Kittiwakes are on decline (Olsen 2011b) and information indicates that the populations of Atlantic Puffin and Manx Shearwater also are in decline (Bergur Olsen unpublished, Olsen 2003).

Criteria 6: The population of 96,000 attending Common Guillemots meets the 1% criteria. The species is widespread but patchily distributed and western and northern Europe accounts for less than half of its global breeding range and the breeding population here is large 2,000,000 – 2,700,000 pairs (BirdLife 2004). The Manx Shearwater breeds almost exclusively within Europe (95 % of its breeding range), nesting mostly on offshore islands in the North-East Atlantic. Its European breeding population was estimated at between 350,000 – 390,000 pairs thus the population of 10,000 pairs meet the 1% criteria. The population of Black-legged Kittiwake on Skúvoy is about 1% of the Eastern North Atlantic & North Seas population (Wetlands International 2004) and 145 pairs of Great Skua in 2010 (Olsen 2011a) is near the 1% criteria of a total population of about 16,000 breeding pairs all confined to Europe (BirdLife International 2004).

15. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Western Palearctic
Temperate, Northern Atlantic, Marine Ecoregion no. 21

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

A classification of the biogeographical provinces of the world (Udvardy 1975)
Marine Ecoregions of the World (MEOW)

16. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & geology: thin mineral soil on basalt bedrock.

Geomorphology and landscape: lowlands and vertical bird cliffs.

pH : no information.

Salinity: Ocean, 34‰

Soil: mainly mineral.

Water permanence: Permanent, but smaller waterbodies may be intermittent.

Summary of main climatic features :

Annual average temperature: 7.1°C

Average July temperature: 11°C

Average January temperature: 3°C

Days of air frost: 41

Rainfall: 1284 mm/year

Hrs. of sunshine: 840 hrs/year

17. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, and climate (including climate type).

The surface area of the island comprises basalt bedrock with thin layer of soil covered with grasses and sedges. The vertical cliffs are barren, with little or no soil and sparse vegetation. The climate is mild and oceanic with high average winter temperatures and low average summer temperatures.

18. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Not applicable

19. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar "Classification System for Wetland Type" present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp • Ts • U • Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

D, A, B, M, N, Tp

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

The Ramsar site at Skúvoy comprises important sea cliffs with seabird colonies containing Common Guillemot, Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*, Manx Shearwater, Black-legged Kittiwake and Northern Fulmar. The populations of Common Guillemot and Manx Shearwater are the largest on the Faroese Islands. Skúvoy provides a favourable habitat during the breeding season for these species and Black Guillemot as well as Great Skua and Arctic Skua does also feed along the coast while the others move to more open sea. Some species use the sea adjacent to the cliffs such as e.g. Atlantic Puffin, Common Guillemot and Northern Fulmar and newly fledged young may temporarily be vulnerable to disturbance after leaving the nest sites i.e. an extraordinary critical stage in their life cycles. During the non-breeding season most of the birds disperse from the breeding colonies. Breeding success is highly variable from year to year as demonstrated for Black-legged Kittiwake (Olsen 2011b).

21. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14, Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 14, Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

The following noteworthy bird species have been counted during bird censuses covering the entire Skúvoy Island: European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (40-50 pairs, 2001), Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (58 pairs 2001, 21 pairs 2010), Dunlin (8 pairs 2001, 0 pairs 2010), Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (75 pairs 2001, 41 pairs 2010), Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (35 pairs 2001, 12 pairs 2010), Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* (128 pairs 2001, 55 pairs 2010), Great Skua *Catharacta skua* (65 pairs 2001, 145 pairs 2010) from (Olsen 2003, Olsen 2011a). Moreover, Razorbill *Alca torda* occurs at a population at possibly 1,300 pairs (Bergur Olsen pers. comm., Olsen 2002).

23. Social and cultural values:

a) Describe if the site has any general social and/or cultural values e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values:

The infields surrounding the village of Skúvoy are used for hay making, potato fields and animal pastures. The outfields are used for animal pastures, mainly sheep.

Traditional sea bird hunting.

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning?

If Yes, tick the box and describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland: **X**

The landowners have the right to hunt seabirds and collect chicks within the limits of the law (Dam 1974). Historically large numbers of seabirds were caught and eggs collected, however, in most cases quantitative data is lacking. Due to the decline in the seabird populations, now most of this hunting has stopped. There is a long tradition for collection of chicks of Manx Shearwater on Skúvoy.

- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

- a) within the Ramsar site:

Private and public. (no real difference is in land use of private and public owned land)

- b) in the surrounding area:

The sea around the site is public.

25. Current land (including water) use:

- a) Within the Ramsar site:

Agriculture, sheep pastures, bird hunting, tourism and fishing.

- b) In the surroundings/catchment:

Fishing and tourism.

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

The populations of Common Guillemot have declined since the first thorough count in the 1960ies and 1972 (Dyck & Meltofte 1975, Olsen 2007, Olsen 2011b) and there are indications that Manx Shearwater and Atlantic Puffin have declined markedly as well. Catch figures for Manx Shearwater provided by local hunters were 10-14,000 chicks in 1960ies and this number declined to about 4,000 in the 1980ies and 1,400 in 2002 (Olsen 2003). Moreover, breeding

success for Black-legged Kittiwake has declined since 1982 and since 2002 there has only been one year (2009) with fledged young (Olsen 2011b).

a: The potential risk to the colony of Manx Shearwater, Atlantic Puffin and European Storm-petrel from the predation by rats should be emphasised. At present Skúvoy is free of rats, however, there are rats on many of the mainly larger islands in the Faroese Archipelago and the introduction of rats could have a devastating effect on the colonies.

Disturbance from tourist boats going close to the island may also have a negative effect locally, however, quantitative data is lacking.

b: The seabird community at Skúvoy is at risk from climate related ecological changes, which may have disrupted the food web of marine birds in Nordic waters. A decreasing number of seabirds such as Common Guillemot, Atlantic Puffin and Black-legged Kittiwake have shown up in the colonies, and local populations are in trouble with few chicks being raised. Thus comprehensive and complex changes seem to happen in the marine ecosystem underlining the need to manage other factors, which may affect the populations such as commercial fisheries, oil spill, seabird harvest and pollutants (Frederiksen 2010).

27. Conservation measures taken:

a) List national and/or international category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site:

In particular, if the site is partly or wholly a World Heritage Site and/or a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, please give the names of the site under these designations.

The Ramsar Site includes the Important Bird Area IBA Skúvoy.

b) If appropriate, list the IUCN (1994) protected areas category/ies which apply to the site (tick the box or boxes as appropriate):

Ia ; Ib ; II ; III ; IV ; V ; VI

c) Does an officially approved management plan exist; and is it being implemented?:

No

d) Describe any other current management practices:

Hunting is regulated according to the Hunting Act from 1954 and later revisions (Dam 1974). During the last years only a few hundred fulmar eggs have been collected and some hundreds Manx Shearwater chicks. The Shearwater hunting has been restricted to the period 5 to 10 September.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

None.

29. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Ornithological research from the Marine Research Institute and Faroese Museum of Natural History

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

Guided tourist tours, leaflets.

31. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Guided tourists, both on land and sea.

32. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Includes land owners and municipality (Skúvoyar Kommuna). Also legislation on bird hunting and legislation on nature protection, which are the jurisdiction of various state agencies.

33. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Skúvoyar Kommuna (Skuvoy Municipality)
Harry Jensen
Bakkavegur 2
260 Skúvoy
Telephone +298 361459

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Bays, J.C., Dawson, M.J., Joensen, A.Holm and Potts, R.G. 1964. The distribution and numbers of the Great Skua (*Stercorarius s. skua* Brünn.) breeding in the Faeroes in 1961. *Dansk Ornith. Foren. Tidsskr.* 58 , pp. 36-41.

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Olsen, I. 2002. Optælling af fuglene på Skúvoy (Census of the birds on Skúvoy). Master theses, University of Copenhagen. 108 pp.

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Udvardy, M. D. F. (1975). A classification of the biogeographical provinces of the world. IUCN Occasional Paper no. 18. Morges, Switzerland: IUCN.

Wetlands International 2004. Waterbird Population Estimates. 4th Edition.

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