

29 JUN 1998

IEG002

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

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

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

28/6/1998

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

EGYPT

3. Name of wetland:

Lake Brillus

4. Geographical coordinates:

31° 22' - 31° 36' N 30° 33' - 31° 07' E

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.)

6. Area: (in hectares)

5.95 km<sup>2</sup>

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

Shallow Fresh to brackish coastal Lagoon along the Mediterranean sea of international importance to wintering birds (water fowl)

8. Wetland Type (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex 1 of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

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

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant:

J, Q, 1

9. Ramsar Criteria: (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12, next page.)

1a · **(1b)** · **(1c)** · 1d | **(2a)** · 2b · 2c · 2d | **(3a)** · 3b · 3c | 4a · **(4b)**

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site: 1b, 3c

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

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

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

Nature Conservation section, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency,  
23A, Ismail Mohammed st. Apt 81, 7th floor,  
Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt

## 12. Justification of Criteria Selected

Lake Burullus is the second largest lake and is the least polluted and most productive wetland in the Egyptian Nile Delta. It is also considered among the most important wetlands in the Mediterranean region.

The lake is important for waterfowl populations, including:

1% or more of population

<i>Anas penelope</i>	24,997	Wintering
<i>Anas clypeata</i>	15,427	Wintering
<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	576	Wintering
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	2,949	Wintering
<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	500	Breeding
<i>Glaucola pratincola</i>	2,000	Breeding
<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	300/617	Breeding/Wintering
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	3,378	Wintering
<i>Larus minuta</i>	3,906	Wintering
<i>Larus ribicundus</i>	13,341	Wintering
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	600-800	Breeding
<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	3,530	Wintering

Several globally threatened species occur at the lake, one of which winters in the area in significant numbers.

The lake is a nursery for Mediterranean fisheries.

## 13. General Location

Kafer El Sheikh Governorate, Kafer El Sheikh

## 14. Physical Features

Shallow fresh to brackish coastal lagoon along the Mediterranean Sea. The lake is .5 - 2.1 meters deep with salinity of 3-11‰. The lake is separated by the sea by a broad dune covered sandbar which varies in width between a few hundred meters in the east to about five kilometers in the west. There is one narrow outlet at Burg El Arab, which connects the wetland with the sea. The lake is fed principally by drainage water which is mainly from agriculture, but also includes some domestic and industrial waste water. Salinity in the lake decreases toward the south and west as the distance from the inlet increases, becoming fresh near the outflows of the drains and canals flowing into the lake from the south. There are known to be some 75 islands scattered throughout the lake. Situated between the reed-beds along the southern shore of the lake and the densely populated agricultural land of the central Nile Delta is an east-west belt of natural brackish water marsh, salt pans and dry sandy/saltish flats, some of which have been turned into fish farms or reclaimed.

### 15. Hydrological values

Drainage basin, Shore protection.

### 16. Ecological features

North shores of Lake Burullus are dominated by dunes, salt marsh and mud flats and the southern shore is bordered by an extensive fringe of reed swamp (mainly *Phragmites* and *Typha*), which covers around 25-30% of the lake area. The lake is rich in submerged vegetation, especially in the mouths of the drains, around the islands and in the eastern part of the lake. Dominant species are *Potamogeton pectinatus* and *P. crispus*.

### 17. Noteworthy flora

Two threatened species of plants occur: *Sonchus macrocarpus* and *Zygophyllum aegyptium*.

### 18. Noteworthy fauna

One threatened species of mammal is recorded, Flower's Shrew *Crocidura floweri*. It is endemic to the Nile Delta, but its present status is unknown.

Lake Burullus has been listed as a BirdLife International Important Bird Area (IBA) given its importance for wintering waterfowl. Significant numbers of the world populations of a number of species occurs in the area. Three threatened species of birds have been recorded: Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (winter visitor), Corncrake *Crex crex* (migrant) and Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (migrant/former breeding bird).

There is a possibility that two species of globally threatened sea turtle breed on the sandbar of the lake: Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas* and Loggerhead *Caretta caretta*. It is also likely that the Nile Delta Toad *Bufo kassasi* which is endemic to Egyptian Nile Delta occurs in the area.

### 19. Social and cultural value

The lake is an important fishery; 31,000 to 46,000 fisherman exploit the lake fishery which yielded 53,000 tons in 1995.

Hunting of quail and songbirds takes place in the Autumn along the sandbar of the lake and waterbird hunting occurs in the wetland in the winter.

There is some grazing in the reedbeds around the lakeshore and collection of reeds for fodder. Also, the reeds are harvested to make mats and building materials which are sold commercially.

**20. Land tenure/ownership of:****a) site**

Most of the land belongs to the government, although there are probably claims of traditional land ownership. Some of the land is privately owned, particularly land which has been sold to private investors.

**b) surrounding area**

A mixture of government/private owned land.

**21. Current land use:****a) site**

Fishing, reclamation for agriculture and fish farms, grazing, scattered human habitations.

**b) surroundings/catchment**

Scattered towns and human settlements, agriculture, fish farms, tourism development (mainly at Baltim), industry (along catchment).

**22. Factors adversely affecting the site's ecological character****a) at the site**

Lake Burullus is severely eutrophic from polluted drainage water.

The freshing of the lake in the south has led to the rapid encroachment of *Phragmites* along the southern shore.

Reclamation of the wetland for agriculture and fish farms has greatly reduced the size of the wetland in the past forty years. While reclamation projects have been halted by Governor decree, some projects have continued.

Building of coastal highway along the sandbar is underway, which will open the area up for agricultural reclamation and tourism development potentially increasing pollution and human disturbance at the lake.

Illegal and over fishing.

Illegal and over hunting.

**b) around the site**

The fresh water inflow into the lake might be reduced as a result of water

economization and irrigation water re-use policies in the Delta, which would effect the salinity of the wetland and change the ecological character of the lake.

### **23. Conservation measures taken:**

In May 1998 the whole of Lake Burullus, including the sand bar was declared a Protected Area under Law 102/1983 for the Natural Protectorates. As the area was only recently declared, no action has been taken as of yet to develop the management of the reserve.

### **24. Conservation measures proposed by not yet implemented:**

It is planned to launch a Medwet-Global Environmental Facility (GEF) in 1999 to develop the management and infrastructure of the Lake Burullus Protected Area, including the production of a management plan.

### **25. Current scientific research and facilities:**

There is a field station at Burg Al Arab operated by the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, which undertakes research at the lake from the perspective of fisheries.

There is some water quality monitoring of the lake being conducted by the National Water Research Center under the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources, mostly from the perspective of irrigation.

There is an on-going Darwin Initiative project which will survey sandbar of the lake for sea turtles nesting sites.

### **26. Current conservation education**

None

### **27. Current recreation and tourism**

There is little or no tourism to the lake, although large scale tourism development has been proposed for leisure and ecotourism for both the national and international tourism markets.

### **28. Jurisdiction**

The lake and fish farms are under the management of the General Authority for the Development of Fisheries Resources (GADFR) under the Ministry of Agriculture.

The management of the Lake Burullus Protected Area and the RAMSAR site is under the Nature Conservation Section of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA).

The Coastal Highway and reclamation projects along the sandbar are under the Ministry of Reconstruction, Housing and New Development Projects.

The Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources manages and maintains the drains and outlet.

The Ministries of Interior/Defense regulate and control access to the lake.

The Governor influences and controls the management of the area.

### 29. Management authority

General Authority for Fisheries Resource Development, Lake Burullus Branch, Burg El Arab, Kafer El Sheikh Governorate.

Lake Burullus Protected Area, Kafer El Sheikh (still being set-up).

Governor of Kafer El Shiekh, Governorate Building, Kafer El Shekh.

### 30. Bibliographical references:

Baha El Din, M. (et. al.), *Biodiversity Assessment of the Mediterranean Coast of Egypt*, Nature Protection Sector, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, 1996.

Baha El Din M., *Pre-project study toward the development of a Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Biodiversity Project for Egyptian Mediterranean Wetlands and Coastal Areas*, EEAA-Medwet-UNDP, 1996.

Baha El Din M., *Report on Sites of Importance for Avifauna and Terrestrial Biodiversity for the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan*. EEAA-Danida, 1997.

Baha El Din S., *Important Bird Areas in Egypt Directory*, Birdlife International (in publication).

EEAA-Medwet-UNDP, *Revised GEF Provisional Project Document*, 1998

Meininger P. & Gamil Atta, *Ornithological Studies in Egyptian Wetlands 1989/90*, Fore-report Nr. 94-01, WIWO-report Nr. 40, 1994.