



## Karavasta Lagoon (Albania)

### *Laguna de Karavasta (Albania)*

#### LOCATION

Adriatic coast, between the mouths of the Shkumbin and Seman Rivers. Municipality of Lushnje. Coordinates: 40°35'N 019°32'E. Area: 20,000 ha

#### RAMSAR WETLAND TYPES

E (Sand shores and bars, dune systems); H (Intertidal marshes: salt and freshwater marshes, salt meadows); J (Coastal brackish, saline lagoons); M (Permanent rivers, streams, creeks); 9 (Man made canals). The lagoon is an enclosed brackish water system connected to the sea by artificially maintained channels. Receives its freshwater input from the surrounding agricultural land and hills.

#### INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Karavasta Lagoon consists of the lagoon itself (5,880 ha) and, in the west, native forest of *Pinus pinea* (unique to the Albanian coast). The area supports up to 5% (700-1,000 individuals) of the total world breeding population of *Pelecanus crispus* and a significant proportion of the European breeding populations of *Sterna albifrons* and *Glareola pratincola*. Other noteworthy species include *Gavia stellata*, *Podiceps cristatus*, *P. nigricollis*, *Phalacrocorax carbo*, *Egretta garzetta*, *Casmerodius albus*, *Ardea cinerea*, *Platalea leucorodia*, *Anser anser* and several *Anas spp.*

#### BIOLOGICAL NOTES

Fish recorded in the area include *Anguila anguila*, *Sparus auratus*, *Dicentrarchus labrax*, *Aphanius fasciatus* and *Gobius buccichii*. Alien species such as *Pinus halepensis* have been introduced into part of the forest.

#### HUMAN USES

The state-owned area is managed by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Current land use of the site is mainly recreational: beach activities, resorts and hunting. In the south, 200 ha of the lagoon have been diked and drained for agricultural purposes, but the productivity of this land is limited due to high salinity. The lagoon itself is fished by a private cooperative. The beaches are used by local residents and day visitors from the town of Lushnja. There is a small hotel as well as a handful of small restaurants. The surrounding land is comprised of small private tenures used for agriculture, including orchards in the landward hills, cereal crops in the plain and some grazing.

#### CONSERVATION MEASURES

The Karavasta National Park is currently managed by seven rangers, but without specialized wetland management training or equipment. Future strategies include improved planning and management of the lagoon to both protect the ecosystem and derive economic benefits for local communities. A management plan for the site was prepared through the European Union's PHARE programme. Ramsar designation date: 29/11/1995

#### ADVERSE FACTORS

Hunting, pollution, agricultural practices and siltation. The pelicans are under pressure from disturbance by visitors and fishermen, and from damage to eggs, nests and young from as yet, unidentified agents. Many of the potential industrial sources of pollution are closed or operating at a fraction of normal capacity. Solid waste along the beaches. Vehicular traffic. Tree-cutting. Overgrazing and cutting of fuelwood (chronic shortage).

From: A Directory of Wetlands of International Importance.  
Ramsar Convention Bureau and Wetlands International, 1999