

# Ramsar sites in Poland



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for Environmental Protection  
and Water Management

The Convention on Wetlands (also called the Ramsar Convention) is an international agreement signed in 1971 to promote conservation and the sustainable use of wetlands worldwide.

According to the Ramsar Convention, wetlands are ‘areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres’.

- The Convention was signed by 172 countries, which designated more than 2 400 sites.
- Every year, World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February 2nd.
- Poland has designated 19 wetland sites.

Cover photo: Narew River National Park,  
Photo: A. Bielonko

# RAMSAR SITES IN POLAND

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- Luknajno Lake Nature Reserve
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- Swidwie Lake Nature Reserve
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Biebrza floodplains in the spring



Elk *Alces alces*



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*



Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Photos: 1. iStockphoto.com/1058512742, 2. iStockphoto.com/1063081650, 3. iStockphoto.com/1069138270, 4. iStockphoto.com/1174804913

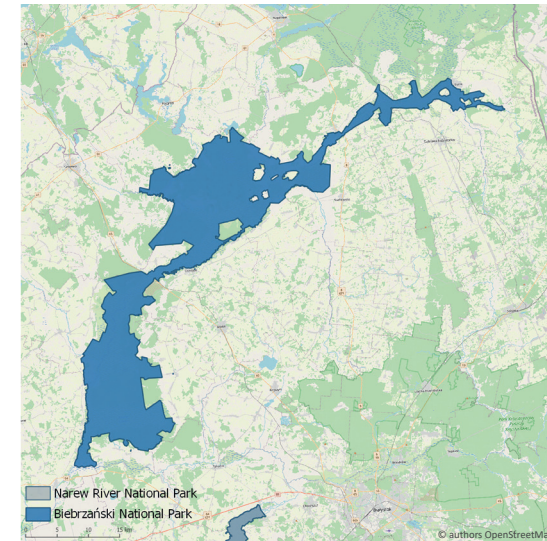


## BIEBRZAŃSKI NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 59 233 ha

The Biebrza valley is home to the most extensive and wildest wetlands in Central Europe. These areas have a beneficial impact on the microclimate, reduce global warming, purify and store the region's water resources. The Biebrza marshes are characterised by great biodiversity. They provide refuge to rare species of birds: Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*), Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*), Black Grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*), Great Snipe (*Gallinago media*), Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*), Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) and Greater Spotted Eagle (*Clanga clanga*). The valley is the largest Elk (*Alces alces*) refuge in Poland.

[www.biebrza.org.pl](http://www.biebrza.org.pl)







Meanders of the Izera River



Boreal Owl *Aegolius funereus*



Black Grouse *Lyrurus tetrix*



Eurasian Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium passerinum*

Photos: 1. Andrzej Raj, 2. iStockphoto.com/1085673390, 3. iStockphoto.com/508788480, 4. iStockphoto.com/1272588455



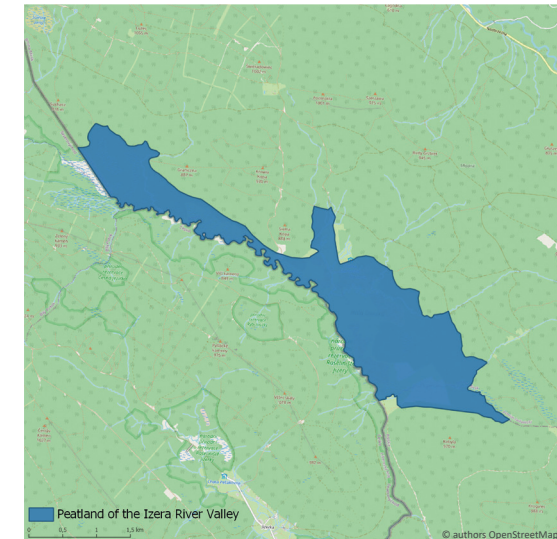
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## PEATLAND OF THE IZERA RIVER VALLEY

Ramsar site area: 529 ha

The Polish 'Peatland of the Izera Valley' site and the Czech 'Horní Jizera' site have become a transborder Ramsar site since 2021. The Polish part includes the bank of the Izera River and the adjacent peat bogs formed in a humid and cool mountain climate. It is home to 180 seed plant species, including Dwarf Birch (*Betula nana*), Dwarf Mountain Pine (*Pinus mugo*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Few-flowered Sedge (*Carex pauciflora*) and Pod Grass (*Scheuchzeria palustris*) and more than 70 bird species, including the Eurasian Pygmy-owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*), Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) and Black Grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*).

[www.wroclaw.rdos.gov.pl](http://www.wroclaw.rdos.gov.pl)







Bird's eye view of the Narew River



Siberian Iris *Iris sibirica*



Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*

Photos: 1. Andrzej Bielonko, 2. iStockphoto.com/1323464840,  
3. iStockphoto.com/155598055

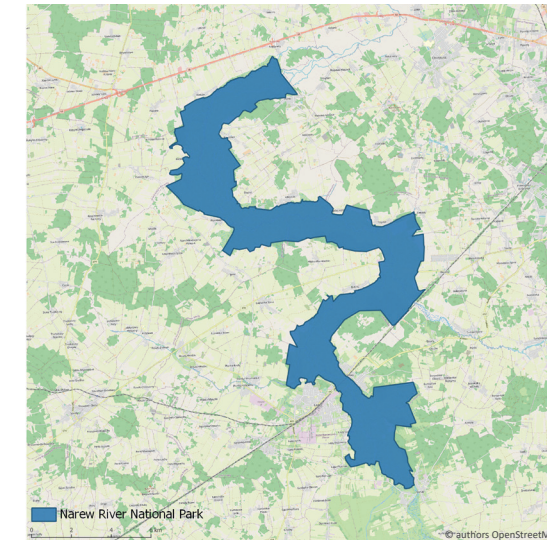


## NAREW RIVER NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 7 350 ha

Within the boundaries of the Narew National Park, the Narew Valley, next to the Biebrza Marshes, is the largest river floodplain marshland in Europe. Due to its unique hydrological and geological conditions, 90% of the area is swampy and inaccessible to people, which creates an excellent habitat for a richness of flora and fauna. This is one of the most important wetland bird refuges in Poland.

[www.npn.pl](http://www.npn.pl)







Floodplains by the 'Bird trail'



Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*



Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Photos: 1. Olga Betańska, 2. iStockphoto.com/629589858,  
3. iStockphoto.com/1142601266

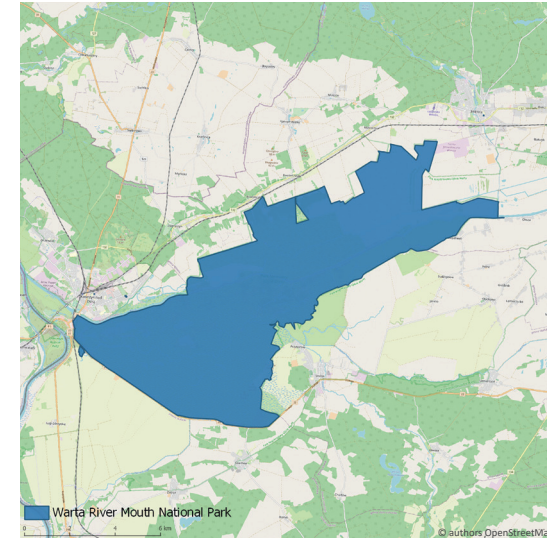


## WARTA RIVER MOUTH NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 8 074 ha

The Warta River Mouth National Park is an area of water and birds. Nearly 280 bird species have been found here, including more than 170 breeding species. The area is home to the European Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), nesting geese, gulls, terns and waders. Ducks, cranes and swans molt here in the summer. In the autumn, the floodplains are dominated by geese, mainly tundra geese – there are nearly 100,000 of them each year. Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and Smew (*Mergellus albellus*) arrive here for the winter from the north. White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) circle majestically above the area.

[www.pnujsciewarty.gov.pl](http://www.pnujsciewarty.gov.pl)



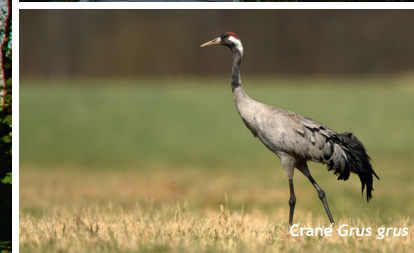




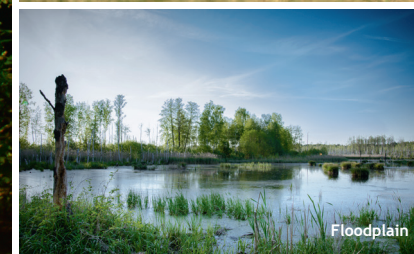
Dominik Oak nature trail



Czahary educational trail



Crane *Grus grus*



Floodplain

Photos: 1. Bartłomiej Szymański, 2. Kamila Mazurkiewicz-Osiak, 3. iStockphoto.com/991032670, 4. Bartłomiej Szymański for the Archives of the Poleski National Park

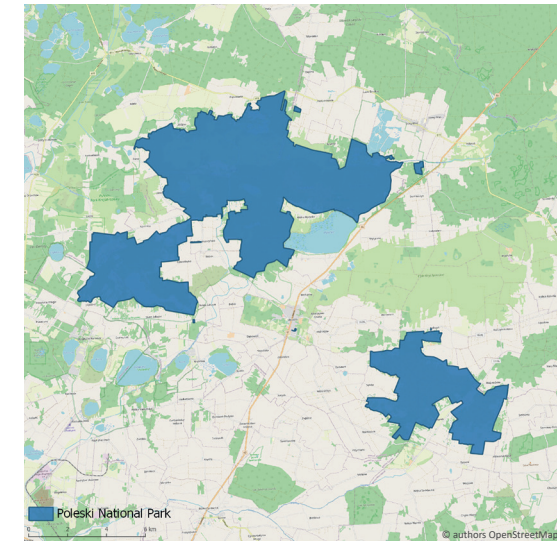


## POLESKI NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 9 762 ha

The Poleski National Park, established in 1990, was the first wetland national park in Poland. It includes natural parts of lowland, transitional and raised bogs, with their characteristic species diversity. There are many rare plant species in the national park, including the postglacial relicts: Shrubby Birch (*Betula humilis*) and Downy Willow (*Salix lapponum*). The species of fauna that live there include, in particular, the European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), Crane (*Grus grus*) and Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*). The population of the latter in the Poleski National Park is the third largest in Poland.

[www.poleskipn.pl](http://www.poleskipn.pl)







Water gate in the Czerwone bog woodland - nature reserve



Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*



Round-leaved Sundew ingesting an insect

Photos: 1. Krzysztof Przybyła, 2. iStockphoto.com/531673043  
3. iStockphoto.com/1025296912



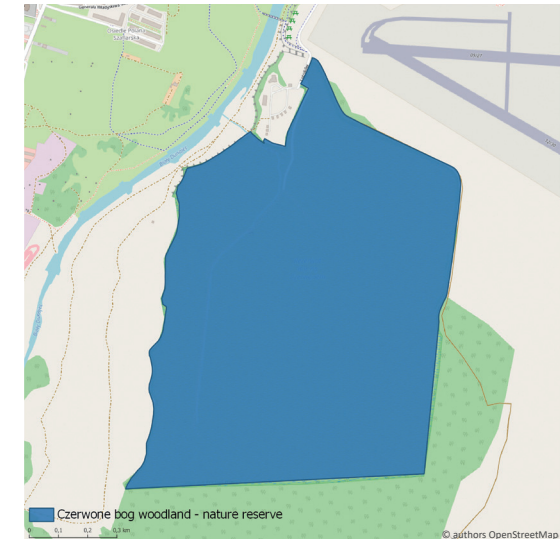
**Nadleśnictwo  
Nowy Targ**

## CZERWONE BOG WOODLAND - NATURE RESERVE

Ramsar site area: 115 ha

„The Czerwone bog woodland – nature reserve” is a part of the transborder complex of raised bogs of the Orava-Nowy Targ Basin. The process of formation of this type of peat bog has continued for over 8,000 years as a result of the accumulation of peat in domes. In Poland, only 7% of wetlands are raised peat bogs.

[www.nowytarg.krakow.lasy.gov.pl](http://www.nowytarg.krakow.lasy.gov.pl)







Sunset over Drużno Lake



Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*



Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*



Fringed Water-lily *Nymphoides peltata*

Photos: 1. Marek Jobda, 2. iStockphoto.com/1296320368, 3. iStockphoto.com/1218637473, 4. iStockphoto.com/1253554881



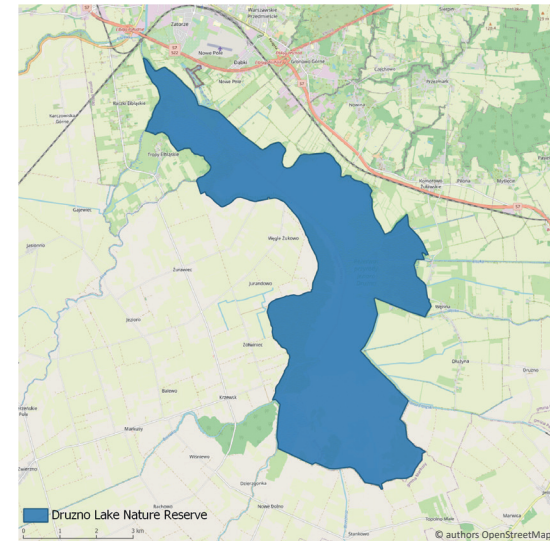
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## DRUŻNO LAKE NATURE RESERVE

Ramsar site area: 3 068 ha

During the growing season, the surface of the Drużno Lake is covered by plants with floating leaves, which form a group of water lilies. These species include the fringe Water-lily (*Nymphoides peltata*) and Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*). The site is a breeding area for many rare and protected bird species, including: White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Little Crake (*Zapornia parva*), Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*), Eurasian Widgeon (*Mareca penelope*), Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*), Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) and terns: Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*), Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*). Thousands of geese: White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), Tundra Bean Goose (*Anser serrirostris*) and Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), congregate on the lake during seasonal migration and after-breeding roosts, while Crane (*Grus grus*) passes the site in the autumn.

[www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn](http://www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn)







View of Karas Lake from Karas village



Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*



Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Photos: 1. Małgorzata Krupa, 2. iStockphoto.com/1322526018,  
3. iStockphoto.com/1303670493



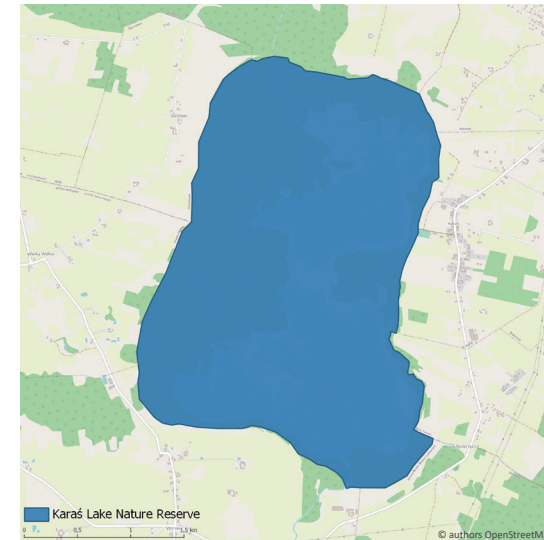
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## KARAŚ LAKE NATURE RESERVE

Ramsar site area: 815 ha

This site covers Karaś Lake and its surrounding marshy forests. Submerged charophyte meadows feature a very rare site of Hedgehog Stonewort (*Chara polyacantha*). Birds of the following species nest here: Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), Western Marsh-harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), Crane (*Grus grus*), Black Kite (*Milvus migrans migrans*), Barred Warbler (*Curruca nisoria*), Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) and Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*). Karas Lake is a molting place for mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), Common Coot (*Fulica atra*) and Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and a source of prey for White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) and Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).

[www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn](http://www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn)







Sunrise over the Black Swamp



Red Kite *Milvus milvus*



Black Kite *Milvus migrans migrans*

Photos: 1. Małgorzata Krupa, 2. iStockphoto.com/1056413366,  
3. iStockphoto.com/959504146



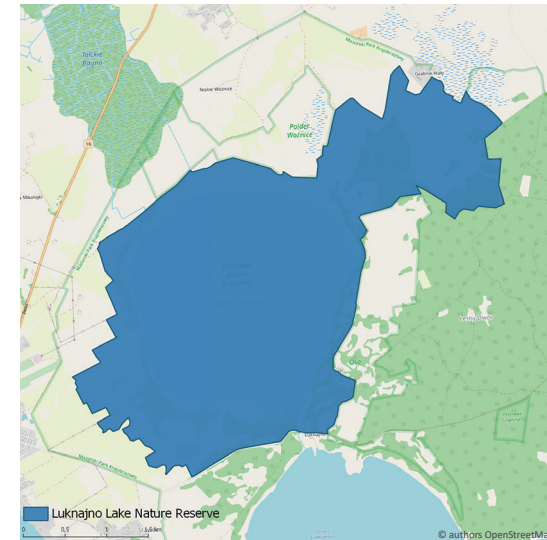
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## LUKNAJNO LAKE NATURE RESERVE

Ramsar site area: 1 189 ha

Luknajno Lake is the first Polish site included in the list of Ramsar sites (1978). Rare habitats of submerged charophyte meadows are found here. The site is an important refuge for the following species: Little Crake (*Zapornia parva*), Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), Crane (*Grus grus*), Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) and Corncrake (*Crex crex*). It is also a habitat of birds of prey: White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), European Honey-buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Clanga pomarina*), Western Marsh-harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) and Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) and Black Kite (*Milvus migrans migrans*). During the migration period, flocks of great numbers of birds appear in the reserve.

[www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn](http://www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn)







Kapeluszowa Island



White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*



Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Photos: 1. Maria Mellin, 2. iStockphoto.com/973528642,  
3. iStockphoto.com/182229801



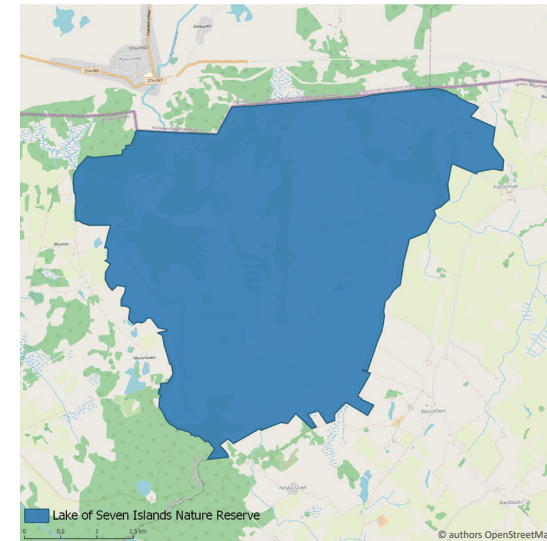
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## LAKE OF SEVEN ISLANDS NATURE RESERVE

Ramsar site area: 1 618 ha

The Lake of Seven Islands has been a Ramsar site since 1984. It includes Lake Oswin with its forest-covered islands and adjacent wetlands. The reserve includes a complex of raised bogs, swampy forests and lowland meadows. The following breeding birds live at the site: Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Little Crake (*Zapornia parva*), Corncrake (*Crex crex*), Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*), Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*), Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Clanga pomarina*), White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) and Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*). The reserve is also a habitat for the European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*).

[www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn](http://www.gov.pl/web/rdos-olsztyn)







View of Swidwie Lake



Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*



Western Marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Photos: 1. Dorota Musielak, 2. iStockphoto.com/13076003880,  
3. iStockphoto.com/836548646



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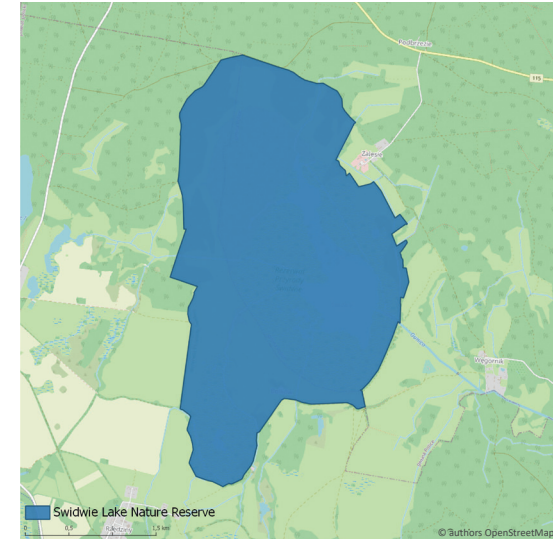
## SWIDWIE LAKE NATURE RESERVE

Ramsar site area: 891 ha

The Swidwie Lake Nature Reserve is a unique area located 20 km north-west of Szczecin. Its heart is the eutrophic lake Swidwie, surrounded by a broad band of reeds. Along with diverse adjacent areas, the lake is an excellent habitat for many bird species during the breeding season and the fall migration and a great wintering ground. In the site, there are observed: Crane (*Grus grus*), Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*), Little Crake (*Zapornia parva*), numerous migrating geese, as well as birds of prey such as White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) and Western Marsh-harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*).

[www.swidwie.pl](http://www.swidwie.pl)

[www.szczecin.rdos.gov.pl](http://www.szczecin.rdos.gov.pl)







A bird's eye view of the Milicz Fishponds



Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*



An island on the Milicz Fishponds



Stag *Cervus elaphus*

Photos: 1., 3. Paweł Kucharski for the Archives of Stawy Milickie S.A.;  
2. iStockphoto.com/1069136766,  
4. Agnieszka Florczyk for the Archives of Stawy Milickie S.A.



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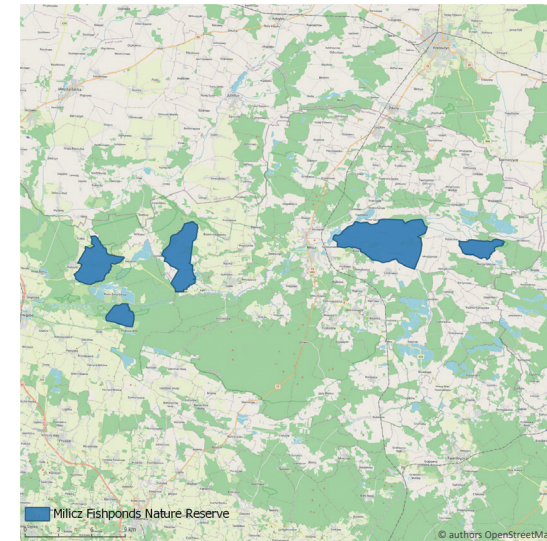
## MILICZ FISHPONDS NATURE RESERVE

Ramsar site area: 5 298 ha

Located in the Barycz River Valley, the Milicz Fishponds are the largest complex of fishponds in Europe. It is a bird paradise where large groups of birds, including Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*), Western Marsh-harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*) and Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Crane (*Grus grus*) and White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), are a daily occurrence. This wetland bird community corresponds to more than 2/3rds of Poland's total bird population. During the migration period, the Milicz Fishponds are visited by up to 60 thousand birds.

[www.wroclaw.rdos.gov.pl](http://www.wroclaw.rdos.gov.pl)

[www.stawymilickie.pl](http://www.stawymilickie.pl)







Lebsko Lake



Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*



Dunes of Slowinski National Park

Photos: 1. iStockphoto.com/1277655988, 2. iStockphoto.com/1254043963,  
3. iStockphoto.com/1279890744

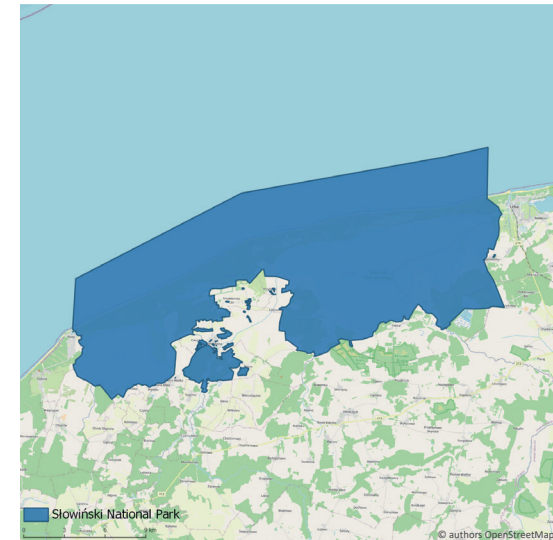


## SŁOWIŃSKI NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 32 744 ha

The Słowiński National Park covers a 33 km stretch of the Baltic coastline and its adjacent strip of shallow coastal waters. The unique landscape of this site consists of shape-shifting dunes, brackish coastal lakes, rushes, meadows, peat bogs, and forests. Particularly valuable are the raised bogs of the Baltic type. Together with heathlands and marshy forests, they extend to the vicinity of Lebsko Lake. The shallow lakes Lebsko and Gardno, together with the surrounding wetlands, provide a safe nesting and migration site for many species of birds: cranes, geese, swans, ducks and waders.

[www.slowinski.pn.pl](http://www.slowinski.pn.pl)







A view of the pond complex



Bog Star *Parnassia palustris*



Ecological site 'Przemkow Swamp'



A bird's eye view of the Przemkow ponds

Photos: 1, 3, 4. Piotr Śmigucki, 2. iStockphoto.com/509465521

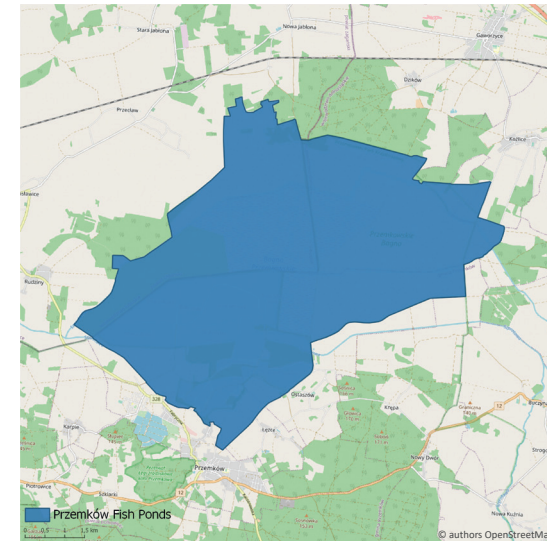


## PRZEMKÓW FISH PONDS

Ramsar site area: 4 605 ha

The site is located in the Szprotawa River valley. The ecological site 'Przemków Swamp', together with its oxbow lakes, is an ecosystem with valuable plant communities. Rare plant species can be found there: Fringed Pink (*Dianthus superbis*), Common Adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), Common Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), Bog Star (*Parnassia palustris*) and Fen Violet (*Viola persicifolia*). Nearly 250 species of birds have been observed in the reserve, including 150 breeding species. The characteristic species include Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) and Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*).

[www.dzpk.pl](http://www.dzpk.pl)







A peat bog near Smogornia



A peat bog near Kamiennik



A peat bog on the Śnieżka plateau



Cloud-berry *Rubus chamaemorus*

Photos: 1, 2, 3. Marek Dobrowolski, 4. Lidia Przewoźnik

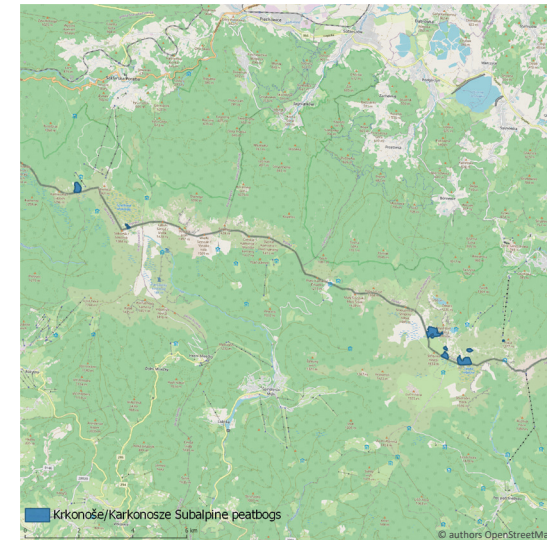


[www.kpnmab.pl](http://www.kpnmab.pl)

## KRKONOŠE/KARKONOSZE SUBALPINE PEATBOGS

Ramsar site area: 40 ha

The subalpine peat bogs in the Karkonosze (40 ha) and the Czech Krkonošská rašeliniště sites (230 ha) constitute a transborder Ramsar site. It consists of peat bogs located in the highest part of the Karkonosze Mountains. On the Polish side, the site includes wetlands between Śnieżka and Smogornia, on the slopes of Sokolnik and in the pass between Szrenica and Kamiennik. A distinctive bird of the area is the northern subspecies of the bluethroat. Cloud-berries (*Rubus chamaemorus*) and Sudeten Lousewort (*Pedicularis sudetica*) grow in the peat bogs.







Smreczynski Lake



Bog Hawker *Aeshna subarctica*



Western Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*

Photos: 1. iStockphoto.com/1058512742, 2. iStockphoto.com/1063081650, 3. iStockphoto.com/1069138270, 4. iStockphoto.com/1174804913

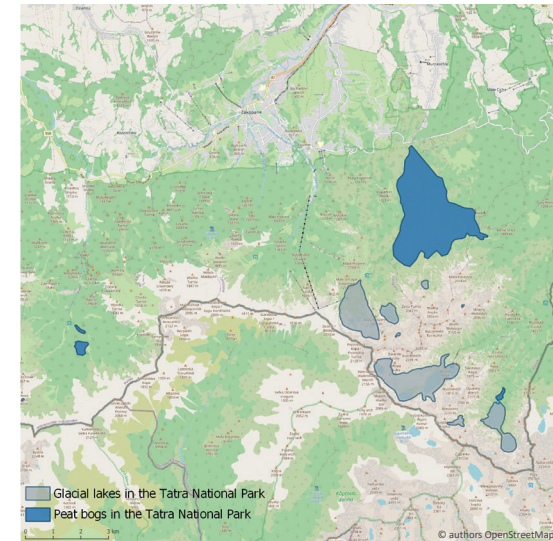


## PEAT BOGS IN THE TATRA NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 741 ha

The site includes wetlands of the subalpine forest part of the Tatra Mountains. It is covered by a mosaic of raised bogs, transitional bogs, Norway spruce bog woodlands and dystrophic lakes (Smreczynski, Toporowe and Rybie). Most of the site is located in the Sucha Woda Valley. The peat bogs of the Tatra National Park are habitats for valuable species of flora: Pod Grass (*Scheuchzeria palustris*), Hook-moss (*Hamatocaulis vernicosus*), Three-ranked Hump-moss (*Meesia triquetra*), Olive Bog-moss (*Sphagnum majus*), Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*) and Few-flowered Sedge (*Carex pauciflora*). The peat bogs are a refuge of the Western Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*) in the Tatra Mountains.

[www.tpn.pl](http://www.tpn.pl)







Valley of Five Polish Lakes



Morskie Oko Lake



Alpine Newt *Ichthyosaura alpestris*



Gąsienicowa Valley

Photos: 1. iStockphoto.com/483900502, 2. iStockphoto.com/508183654, 3. iStockphoto.com/651695788, 4. iStockphoto.com/902568994

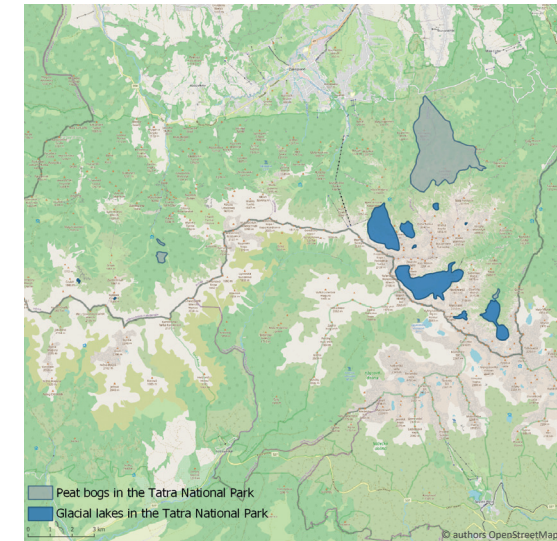


## GLACIAL LAKES IN THE TATRA NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 571 ha

This mountainous site is located in the High Tatras (including Morskie Oko Lake, the Valley of Five Polish Lakes, the Gąsienicowa Valley). The site features dystrophic water reservoirs, alpine tundras, tall herb communities, Dwarf Pine (*Pinus mugo*) thickets and granite screes. In the high-mountain peat bogs, some rare plant species are preserved: Few-flowered Sedge (*Carex pauciflora*) and Alpine Bulrush (*Baeothryon alpinum*). The glacial ponds of the Tatra National Park are the only nesting site of the Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) in the Polish Tatra Mountains.

[www.tpn.pl](http://www.tpn.pl)







Mewia Łacha Nature Reserve



Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

Photos: 1. iStockphoto.com/481995832, 2. iStockphoto.com/1224665403



## VISTULA RIVER MOUTH

Ramsar site area: 1 748 ha

The site includes the estuary of the Vistula River with the adjacent waters of the Baltic Sea and the eastern part of the estuary of the Vistula Smiala with the coastal lakes Ptasi Raj and Karas. Its most valuable parts are protected as the nature reserves 'Mewia Łacha' and 'Ptasi Raj'. It is an important refuge for wetland birds associated with the coast. 'Mewia Łacha' is the only nesting site in Poland for the Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*). The site is one of the most important breeding areas for the Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*), the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and the Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*). It is also the only place in Poland where the Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) has been reported to breed.

[www.gov.pl/web/rdos-gdansk](http://www.gov.pl/web/rdos-gdansk)







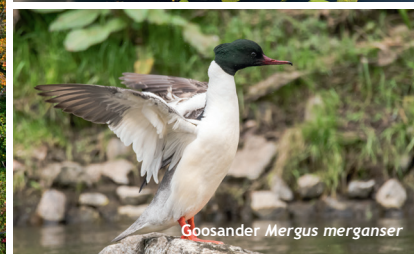
View of Lake Wigry



Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*



A pier on Lake Wigry



Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Photos: 1. iStockphoto.com/1058512742, 2. iStockphoto.com/1063081650, 3. iStockphoto.com/1069138270, 4. iStockphoto.com/1174804913

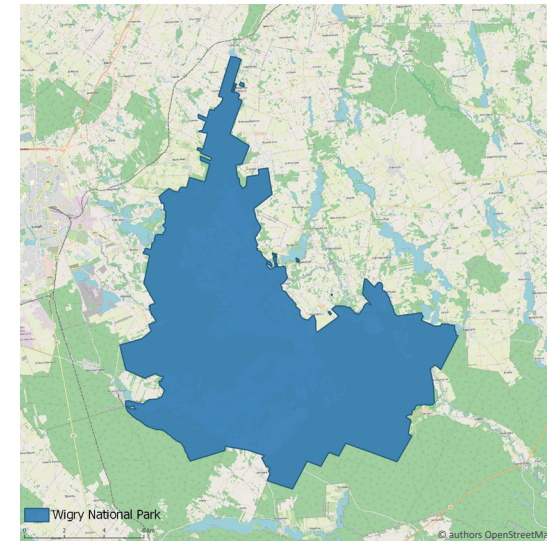


## WIGRY NATIONAL PARK

Ramsar site area: 15 085 ha

In the Wigry National Park, wetlands occupy almost 25% of its area. There are 42 lakes and several river valleys within the park's boundaries. The strong contrast in environmental conditions means that different reservoirs often are inhabited by different and very unique plant and animal communities. Wigry Lake – the largest body of water in the park – is the fifth deepest and tenth largest lake in Poland. The most numerous wetland bird breeding species that live there are: Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) and Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*).

[www.wigry.org.pl](http://www.wigry.org.pl)





# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF WETLANDS?

- Wetlands play a key role in the life cycles of amphibians, reptiles and birds.
- They store water and prevent droughts and floods.
- They purify drinking water by removing pesticides and fertilisers.
- They enable water transportation and energy production.
- They are an attractive place for recreation and tourism.
- They accumulate twice as much carbon as forests.
- They purify and humidify air.
- They provide food.

# WHAT THREATS DO WETLANDS FACE?

- Intensive farming (elimination of ponds, drainage ditches).
- Changes in river morphology (damming, dredging, straightening).
- Consumer choices (high water footprint products).
- Invasive non-native species (Canadian goldenrod, raccoon).
- Residential construction in floodplains.
- Water pollution from fertilisers and pesticides.
- Horticultural use of peat.
- Climate change.

# SOLUTIONS:

- Sustainable wetland management (extensive agriculture, organic food production, reduced river damming, alternatives to peat in horticulture).
- Wise consumer choices (food, clothing, packaging and transportation with a low water footprint; rainwater tanks and rain gardens systems).
- Restoration of degraded wetlands by rewetting.



NATIONAL FOCAL POINT OF CONVENTION ON WETLANDS  
GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

52/54 Wawelska Street, 00-922 Warsaw, Poland  
email: sekretariat.ramsarska@gdos.gov.pl

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