

LAGOON OF NARTA

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Introduction

Narta Lagoon is situated in Vlora region, Albania. It is one of the biggest and most important lagoons in Albania. Narta lagoon has a surface of the water about 42 km², from which 13.8 km² are used for the salt production in the salt mine of Skrofotina. The depth of the lagoon is from 0.70 m to 1.50 m. The salt mine in Narta is one of the oldest in Balkans and Albania. Salt production till 1990 was 140-150 thousand tones per year. After the nineties the production was 20-25 thousand tones per year.



The south and southwest the lagoon is bordered by the picturesque hills of Zverneci. In this part of the lagoon two islands are spread, on the biggest one the Monastery of Zverneci is situated.



Narta area is considered as one of the most important lagoon areas in Albania based on the high biodiversity values and the number of habitat found there. The natural ecosystem of Narta is characterized by a rich diversity of habitats as lagoon area, delta of Vjosa river, salt marshes, sand dunes, pine forest, islet of Zverneci. The relations between these various types of habitats are of great ecological importance.

In many cases the relations between these various types of habitats is of great ecological importance. On the ecological point of view, they form a pathway for dispersion and migration of plant and animal species. The studies for this area have shown the importance of the area related to the interesting and specific flora. In the vast variety of habitats, many of the plant and animal species that occur are specifically and uniquely found in this coastal area.



The Narta area is important not only for the most specialized species but also for a great number of less specialized and less characteristic ones.



All these plant species make up a great national asset with economic and scientific values. Some of them are extremely rare, some others have scientific values, and most of them make up widely used economic groups such as the medicinal, aromatic, 2 industrial alimentary and decorative plants. Many species of this area are found in the RED Book of Albania.

The majority of birds, nearly 91%, are using mainly the lagoon waters. Inside the lagoon they are distributed uniformly with higher concentrations in the lagoon center, which is also the less disturbed sub area.

Ducks (*Anas sp.*) and Coots (*Fulica atra*) are the most numerous with respectively 47% (18000 individuals) and 35% (13500 individuals).



The data of the last years lists Narta area as the second most important site for water birds in Albania, with Karavasta being the first one. In winter more than 23% of all Albanian water birds find refuge in the area. For more than 35 species the area holds more than 6% of national effective.

Narta is the main wintering site of Albania for Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber roseus*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, Golden eye *Bucephala clangula*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* and Golden Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*. It is worth mentioning the presence of the Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus* (9%) and Audouin's gull *Larus audouinii* (100%), both considered as Globally Endangered Species.

Narta area is also a site of international importance. The area fulfills the Ramsar criteria (Wetlands of International Importance) for the total number of wintering water birds with more than 48.700 individuals (20.000 individuals being Ramsar criteria). For three species the area holds more than 1% of the regional population.