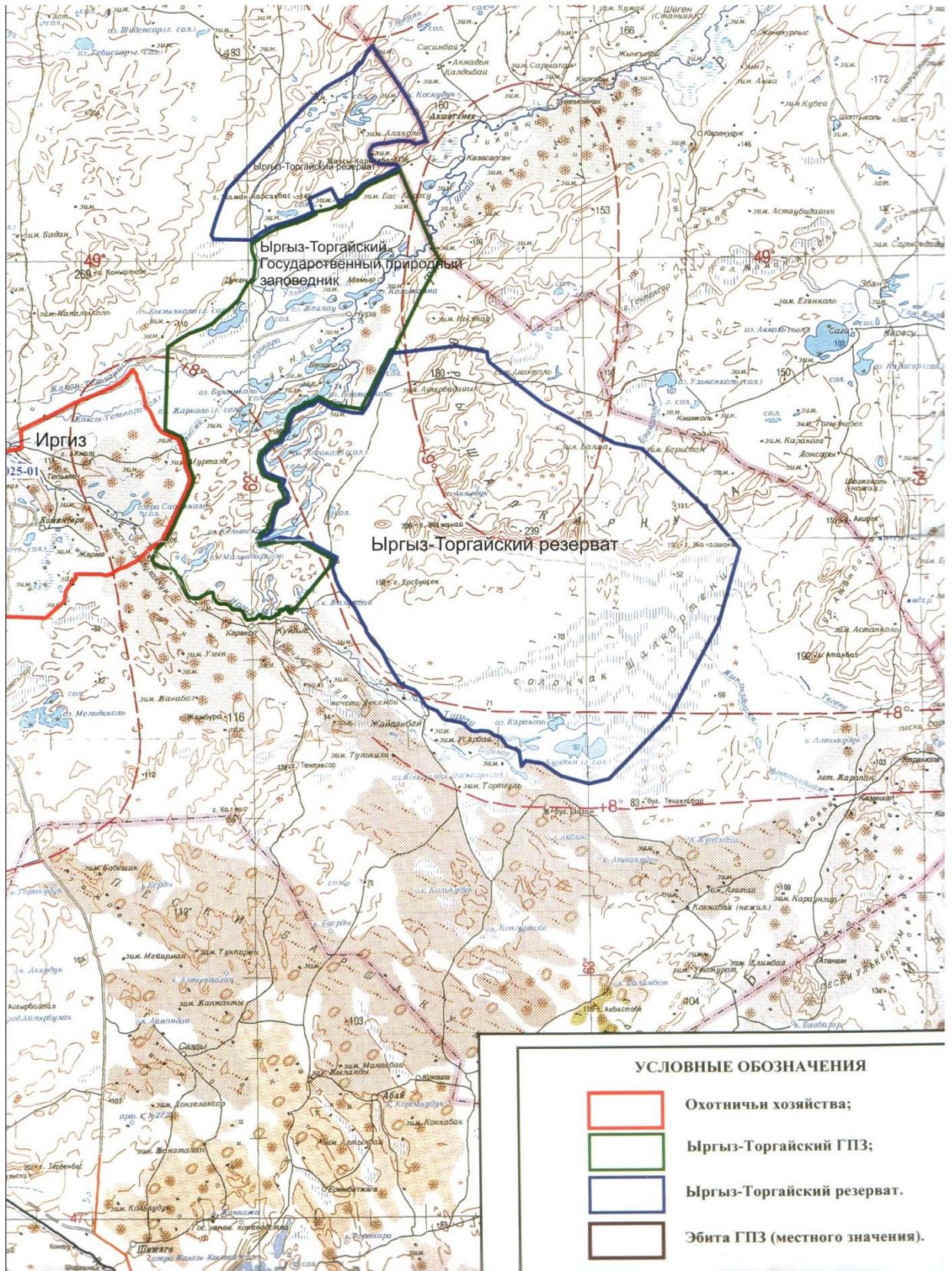


Kazakhstan, National Report, 2021

Task 1: Preparation of a report on threats to "Lakes in the lower reaches of the Irgiz and Turgai rivers" and the "Kulikol-Taldykol lake system" according to the measure on preparation of measures to mitigate negative anthropogenic impacts for conservation of the Ramsar and potential Ramsar sites.

Geography and history of the lake, status, significance, how many people live. What environmental services are provided by the lake.

The wetland is located in Irgiz district (with the population of 15 thousand people) of Aktobe region, northeast of the Aral Sea and occupies an area of 348 thousand hectares. The South Turgay table-stepped plain, in which the site is located, is cut by valleys of the summer drying rivers - Ulkayak, Irgiz and Turgay, belonging to the drainless basin of the terminal solonchak depression Chelkar-Tengiz. The boundaries of the site include a section of the delta part of the Turgai hollow, covering the lower reaches of the Turgai and Irgiz rivers at their confluence. Many lakes of different origin, geomorphology, dynamics of hydrological regime, water salinity degree are scattered here. The source of filling of reservoirs is mainly the surface runoff, which depends on the size of snow cover and the intensity of spring flooding. Low humidity, strong warming of water bodies and their large surface leads to significant desiccation and complete drying out of the lakes by the fall due to intense evaporation. The wetland has the status of a specially protected natural area (SPNA), as since 1968 it is part of the Turgay state natural (zoological) reserve of national importance (Fig. 1). The wetland is used by waterfowl mainly during migration and molting and relatively less for nesting. Mass accumulations of waterfowl during molting were one of the main reasons for including this area in the category of sites of international importance. The total number of waterfowl during moulting season depends on the phase of the watering cycle, and in favourable years (average water availability) reaches several tens and hundreds of thousands (up to 300,000) of individuals. The site has a great potential as an object of ecological tourism, mainly for birdwatchers.



- **1.1 Report on threats to "Lakes in the lower reaches of the Irgiz and Turgai rivers:**
Fig. 1. Lakes in the lower reaches of the Irgiz and Turgai rivers (48°42'N 62°11'E)

- *Who owns it, who are the stakeholders, who manages and uses it, whether the programs for management are existed?*

The land plot on which the wetland is located is owned by the local executive body - the Akimat (the governmental branch) of Irgiz district of Aktobe region. It is managed by the Republican State Institution "Irgiz-Turgay State Nature Reserve" of the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with the area of 1,173,511 ha (the largest protected area of Kazakhstan having the status of a legal entity). There is a management plan for the reserve, which includes activities for the study and protection of the site, but there is no separate management plan for the wetland.

- *What kind of anthropogenic impacts are existed.*

The construction of the "Center-West" freeway is planned, which will connect the capital Nur-Sultan with the Caspian city of Aktau (about 2000 km). The projected section "Turgai-Irgiz" (205 km long) crosses the wetland "Lakes in the lower reaches of the Turgai and Irgiz rivers" (Fig. 2). The potential threat to the wetland ecosystem is not reflected in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), one of the main documents of the project. Due to the fact that this wetland is located within the Turgai State Natural (Zoological) Reserve of national importance, in accordance with subparagraph 2) of paragraph 1 of Article 69 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Specially Protected Natural Areas", "destruction of nests, dens, lairs and other habitats" is prohibited, which will inevitably result in the construction of the highway.

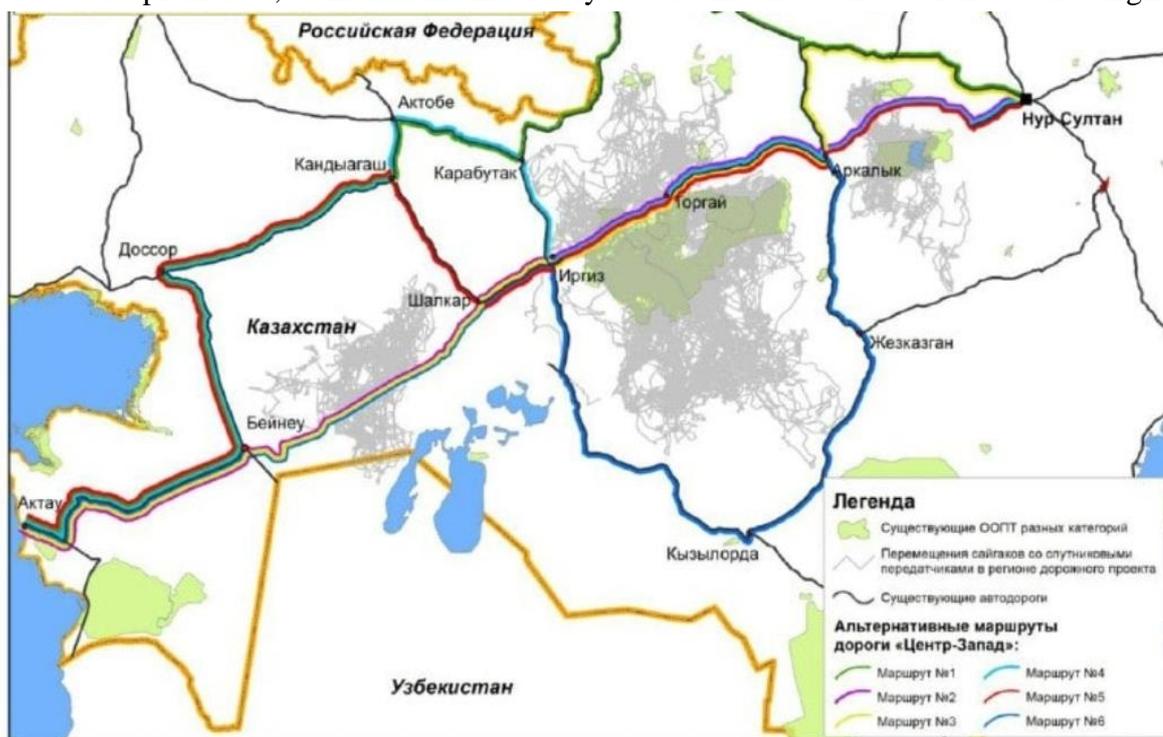


Figure 2. Route options for the Center-West Road (©ASBC (Kazakhstan Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity))

- *Proposal of measures to mitigate negative anthropogenic impacts.*

The Road Committee of the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan is recommended to change the route on the section "Turgai-Irgiz" of the projected

transport corridor "Center-West" with bypassing the territories of Turgai nature reserve and Irgiz-Turgai State Nature Reserve.

The report was sent to the supervising agency - to the Minister of Ecology and Geology of Natural Resources of the RK (the Republic of Kazakhstan) and to the local administration - to the Akim (the head) of Aktobe region, as well as to the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development of the RK.

An article was prepared and posted:

1) On CAREC website following the link: <https://carececo.org/main/news/vyyavlennopotentsialnaya-ugroza-dlya-ramsarskogo-ugodya/>

2) On Facebook following the link:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2881298548820157&id=100008201195889&comment_id=2881304248819587¬if_id=1607372234039782¬if_t=feed_comment&ref=notif

1.2 Threats report of "Kulykol-Taldykol lake system":

- *Geography and history of the lake, status, significance, how many people live. What kind of environmental services are provided.*

The wetland "Kulykol-Taldykol lake system" is located in Kamystinsky district (with the population of 12 thousand people) of Kostanai region and is in the area of intensive agricultural production of commercial grain. Arable lands surround the lake basin from all sides, starting at a distance of 2.0 km to 5 km (Fig. 3). The location of arable lands has both negative (disturbance of watershed) and positive (loss of grain during harvesting attracts geese during migrations) meanings. It has been noted that the use of more advanced agricultural machinery, which reduces grain losses, worsens foraging conditions during autumn migrations, and birds slightly change their route within certain limits. The wetland does not have the status of a specially protected natural area.



Fig. 3. Kulikol-Taldykol lake system (51°22'N 61°52'E)

- *Who owns it, who are the stakeholders, who manages and uses it, are there any management programs.*

Lakes Kulykol and Taldykol with the adjacent territory are part of the hunting farms Shogyrkol, Kulykol and Taldykol. Problems in the organization of protected areas in the Kulykol-Taldykol lake system may arise from the clash of interests of hunters, peasant farms, which use this area as cropland and pastures. There is no wetland management plan.

Water from Lake Taldykol is used by local population in small volumes for watering cattle and technical needs.

On Kulykol lake and a three-kilometre coastal strip in the beginning of the years of 2000 by the decision of regional authorities a zone of rest where hunting was forbidden was established (suggestions of the project of WWF on studying of wetlands of Kostanay region and creation of ecological network of wetlands, the coordinator of the project Bragina T.M., 1998-2000). In 2006, in the frames of GEF/UNEP/WWF regional project "Econet - Central Asia", the national group of experts prepared and submitted to the Committee for Forestry and Hunting the scheme of ecological networks of Kazakhstan (the project coordinator Bragina T. M., the scheme was accepted by the Government of Kazakhstan). The scheme proposes to organize a wildlife preserve of national importance on Kulykol-Taldykol lake system.

Within the framework of the project of the European Union on conservation of the Red-breasted Goose "LIFE for safe flight", the Kazakh component of which is realized by ASBC (Kazakhstan's Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity), from October 5-29, 2020 ASBC together with the Naurzum nature reserve conducted monitoring of migration of the Red-breasted Goose and other geese on the territory of Kostanay region, other birds were also counted in passing. Together with A.V.Davygora we counted in autumn on Lake Zhetykol in the

Orenburg region of the Russian Federation and on Lake Taldykol in the Kostanay region of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In order to improve the estimation of number of such rare species as Red-breasted Goose and Lesser White-fronted Goose it was decided to continue such works. According to available information, ASBC and the Reserve also conducted a spring census in 2021.

According to T.M. Bragina, there was recreational fishing of the river long-toed crayfish in Kulykol lake in 2020, which indicates a relatively clean water composition.

However, the average morphometric parameters of the crayfish were smaller than the average size for the species, indicating insufficient forage, apparently due to the increased salinity of the reservoir due to a number of dry years (paper in press).

- *What kind of anthropogenic impacts are existed.*

Earlier negative factors were trampling by cattle (reduction of nesting sites and death of clutches) and haying. There were farms on the western shore of Lake Kulykol, which are partially dismantled due to the reduction of livestock. There is a pollution by pesticides and manure, disturbance from fishermen conducting fishing, poaching. At present, the threat is posed by fires, which are often spread from the steppe to the reed areas or as a result of arson.

- *Proposal of measures to mitigate negative anthropogenic impacts.*

The Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of RK together with the akimat of Kostanay region is recommended to take necessary measures for inclusion of Kulykol-Taldykol system of lakes into specially protected natural areas.

The report was sent to the supervising agency, the Minister of Ecology and Geology of Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the local administration, the akim (the head) of Kostanai region. The Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of RK together with the akimat of Kostanay region is recommended to take necessary measures for inclusion of Kulykol-Taldykol system of lakes into specially protected natural areas.

The article was prepared and posted on Facebook following the link:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2881302625486416&id=100008201195889

Task 2: Carrying out three works on monitoring and practical preservation of Lake Karakol and the preparation of "The Educational Center of Lake Karakol" in Aktau. Of the three stages of work on the monitoring and practical conservation of Lake Karakol and the preparation of the concept of the "Educational Center of Lake Karakol" in Aktau, the first two stages were combined - sanitary cleaning of the shores and bird counts on Lake Karakol, as trips were carried out mainly jointly. These works were covered by **155 people in total**, including: field visits - 120 people, meetings of the working group - 35 people.



2.1 Organization of sanitary cleaning and bird counts on Lake Karakol by the volunteer group of the Karakol Lake Keepers eco-patrol and together with the Ustyurt Nature Reserve under the international "March of Parks" campaign:

2.1.1. Volunteer group of the Ecopatrol "Keepers of Lake Karakol" from students of "Lyceum Kyzyltobe" of Munaylinskiy region (20 people) and Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Chemical and Biological direction of Aktau (15 people) took part in 55th International Waterfowl Winter Census (IWC) on February 01, 2021 together with representatives of the Ustyurt reserve. As a result we counted: mute swan - 5500 specimens, tufted duck - 3500, coot - 2000, ducks of uncertain species - 4000, herring gull - 200, hoopoe - 18 specimens.



2.1.2. Volunteer Ecopatrol Unit "Keepers of Lake Karakol" that consisted from the number of students of "Lyceum Kyzyltobe" of Munaylinsk district (25 people) and Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Chemical and Biological direction of Aktau (13 people) took part in the sanitary purification and monitoring of birds on Lake Karakol together with representatives of Ustyurt nature reserve on April 9, 2021. As a result, 10 cubic meters of household and construction waste were collected, which, with technical support from MAEK-Kazatomprom, were taken away and placed in the municipal solid waste landfill. Also the "keepers of Karakol" using binoculars and spyglasses counted 107 flamingos and over 60 individuals of big cormorants, including on the nest.

2.1.3 Volunteer Ecopatrol Unit "Keepers of Lake Karakol" consisting of biology students of the University, employees of environmental structures, environmental NGOs and other residents of Aktau (25 people) took part in the sanitary cleaning and monitoring of birds on Lake Karakol together with representatives of Ustyurt Nature Reserve on May 15, 2021. As a result, 10 cubic meters of household and construction waste was collected, which, with technical support from MAEK-Kazatomprom, was taken away and placed in the municipal solid waste landfill. Also the Karakol Keepers observed the birds of Lake Karakol and counted: flamingo - 9 individuals,

about 60 individuals of Great Cormorant (including the nest), 64 individuals of Great Spindle-tailed Godwit, Stilted Plover - 7 individuals, Glossy Ibis - 2 individuals, Black-headed Pipit - 1 individual.



2.1.4. Volunteer group of ecopatrol "Keepers of Lake Karakol" from the number of biology students of Yessen University (23 people) took part in the sanitary cleaning and bird watching on Lake Karakol together with representatives of Ustyurt Nature Reserve on June 02, 2021. As a result, 15 bags of household waste were collected. Also, we observed birds and counted: Mute Swan - 54 birds, Flamingo - 27, Cormorant - 60, White Heron - 9, Red-necked Pochard - 5, Marsh Harrier - 1.

2.2 Organization and holding of two working group meetings on implementation of the Karakol Lake Educational Center concept with participation of representatives of interested state bodies, NGOs and business structures:

2.2.1 In February, the meeting of round table "Potential opportunities for sustainable use of the wetland "Lake Karakol" with the participation of representatives of various nature protection state structures and environmental NGOs, regional department of investments and tourism development, enterprise "MAEK-Kazatomprom", regional chamber of entrepreneurs "Atameken" and Nazarbayev Intellectual school of chemical and biological direction of Aktau was held in February. As a result, the minutes of the round table were signed and a resolution with practical recommendations for the sustainable use of Lake Karakol was developed and sent to all stakeholders.

2.2.2. In May, a roundtable meeting "Issues of compliance with environmental legislation on Lake Karakol - part of the Karakiya-Karakol state zoological reserve of national importance" was held with the participation of representatives of various environmental government agencies and environmental NGOs, the enterprise "MAEK-Kazatomprom", the regional chamber of entrepreneurs "Atameken" and the Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Chemical and Biological direction in Aktau. During the round-table discussion it was found out that at the end of February 2021, a member of the Majilis of the Parliament, Edil Zhanbyrshin, sent to the Minister of Environment, Magzum Mirzagaliyev, a parliamentary inquiry on the need to nominate Karakol Lake to the Ramsar List, and he received a not very clear answer. As a result of the round table, the minutes were signed and it was decided to send a letter to the Minister of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the RK, the akim (the head) of Mangistau region and a deputy of the

Majilis (the lower house of parliament) of the RK with a request to take necessary measures.



Links to publications on the results of Task 2:

- 1) <https://ecojer.kz/news/161>
- 2) <https://ecojer.kz/news/178>
- 3) https://www.lada.kz/aktau_news/ecology/91385-bez-obschestvennikov-ozero-prevratilos-by-v-svalku-zaschitniki-karakolya-podvergli-kritike-deystviya-inspektorov.html
- 4) <https://www.acbk.kz/article/default/view?id=531>
- 5) <https://maek.kz/index.php/ru/portfolio-4/news/477-arak-ldegi-senbilik-marsh-parkov-na-karakole>
- 6) <http://druzhnyerebiata.kazgazeta.kz/news/30506>
- 7) <https://mangystautv.kz/ru/news/society/na-ozere-karakol-obitayut-22-vida-ptic-krasnoknizhnikov>
- 8) <https://bilimdinews.kz/?p=135475>
- 9) https://dknews.kz/inner-news.php?id_cat=14%20&&%20id=165256
- 10) <https://yvision.kz/post/936232>
- 11) <https://www.facebook.com/100048093678444/posts/304345174511936/?app=fbl>
- 12) <https://www.facebook.com/100048093678444/posts/299467911666329/?app=fbl>
- 13) <https://www.facebook.com/100048093678444/posts/299462318333555/?app=fbl>
- 14) https://www.lada.kz/aktau_news/society/89980-shkolniki-sobrali-kamaz-musora-na-karakole.html
- 15) <https://www.inaktau.kz/news/3075240/s-ozera-karakol-vyvezli-samosval-musora>
- 16) <https://ainews.kz/society/shkolniki-sobrali-kamaz-musora-na-karakole--2663438>
- 17) <https://bilimdinews.kz/?p=149930>
- 18) <https://kazlenta.kz/28670-ozero-karakol-v-garmonii-s-prirodoy.html>
- 19) <https://www.facebook.com/100048093678444/posts/256055122674275/?app=fbl>
- 20) <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mangystau-eco/press/news/details/161198?lang=ru>

In addition to the tasks outlined, the following work has also been done:

1. Memorandums of Understanding and Cooperation were signed, including on the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands:

- 1) With the akimat of Mangistau region;
- 2) With the Akimat of Aktobe region;

3) Tripartite memorandum with the Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Mangystau Oblast "Atameken" and the Regional Environmental Council of Mangistau Oblast of the Republican Association "Ecojer.

2. An expert on ecotourism development from Karaganda was invited to Lake Karakol as a consultant, who has an experience of working in Germany on a project to attract European tourists to Ustyurt:

Publication link:

<https://www.facebook.com/100048093678444/posts/314935426786244/?app=fbl>

3. Publications to increase the recognition of RRI-CA:

- 1) <https://ecojer.kz/news/189>
- 2) <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mangystau-eco/press/news/details/215815?lang=ru>
- 3) https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=314149263531527&id=100048093678444
- 4) https://www.lada.kz/aktau_news/ecology/86852-na-ozere-karakol-ustanovili-stendy-s-informaciy-o-zaprete-poletov-dronov.html

Sources of information:

- 1) Ornithological observations in the wetlands of Kustanay region in autumn 2001 (number of pages - 25) / N.N. Berezovikov, S.N. Erokhov // Russian Ornithological Journal 2013, Vol. 22
- 2) Kulikol-Taldykol lake system / Key ornithological territories of Kazakhstan, pp. 128-130 // Ed. S.L. Sklyarenko, D.R. Welsh, M. Brombacher, Almaty, 2008
- 3) Irgiz-Turgay Lakes / Key Ornithological Territories of Kazakhstan, pp. 142-144 // Ed. Sklyarenko S.L., Welsh D.R., Brombacher M., Almaty, 2008.
- 4) Saiga antelope in Kazakhstan at serious risk from "Road Center West" Project / BRIEFING DOCUMENT August 2020
- 5) Section 12. Ornithofauna, pp. 275-312 / Environmental monitoring studies of the environment of the North-Eastern Caspian Sea during the development of oil fields by NCOC N.V. in the period from 2006 to 2016 // Almaty: NCOC N.V., KAPE, 2018
- 6) Protection of wetland bird habitats / Skokova N. N., Vinogradov V. G. - M.: Agropromizdat, 1986. - 240 c.
- 7) Wetlands of KAZAKHSTAN: ROLE, PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES / T. Kerteshev, UNDP National Project Manager, 2011
- 8) "Kulikol-Taldykol lake system. Kostanay oblast. Threats" / T.M. Bragina, 2021
- 9) Highway "Center-West" / material at the link: <https://www.acbk.kz/article/default/view?id=469>
- 10) Construction of the "Center-West" highway could destroy the saiga population / material from the link: <https://www.zakon.kz/5035294-stroitelstvo-trassy-tsentr-zapad-mozhet.html>

The report was prepared by

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