

Report by Thymio Papayannis (Ramsar, MedWet Co-ordinator), Tobias Salathé (Ramsar, Regional Co-ordinator for Europe) and Jean Jalbert (Tour du Valat, Conservation Director).

## Progress with implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

The Convention on Wetlands entered into force in Turkey on 30 November 1994. This country has so far designated nine Ramsar Sites, covering together 159,300 ha, some of them among the largest Ramsar Sites in the Mediterranean region. Besides the Ramsar status, most of the sites, or parts of them, benefit from additional national protection status.

Given this promising situation, it was felt timely that efforts should be undertaken, as a high priority, to exchange information and expertise between people involved in the management and conservation of different Ramsar Sites in Turkey, and to prepare a common legal basis for their long-term sustainable use and conservation. It was therefore suggested that Turkey should establish soon a National Ramsar Committee. The Committee should be composed of representatives of the local management authorities of the different Ramsar Sites and the main stakeholders regarding wetlands issues; notably the General Directorate for Environmental Protection, the Authority for Protected Special Areas, the General Directorate for National Parks and Game & Wildlife, the State Hydraulic Works, and the key NGO partner DHKD. The Committee would work, in priority, on the elaboration of a National Wetlands Policy for Turkey, the establishment of integrated management plans for all Turkish Ramsar Sites, and the improvement of the institutional capacities by providing further professional training to the appropriate management staff at local and national level. The "International Meeting on Conservation of Wetlands" organised in Cappadocia in 1995 by the General Directorate for Environmental Protection and its conclusions were recalled, and it was agreed that they are still valid as a very useful guideline for further work on wetland conservation and management in Turkey.

## Active participation in the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee

The MedWet Co-ordinator invited the Turkish authorities to play a more active part in the MedWet/Com, regretting the absence of a Turkish delegation at its second meeting in Valencia in early 1999, due to unforeseeable difficulties. It is hoped that the General Directorate for Environmental Protection will be appropriately represented at the forthcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the



Delta del Kizilirmak, sitio Ramsar en la costa turca del Mar Negro

Mediterranean Wetlands Committee (MedWet/Com3) to be held in Djerba (Tunisia) from 1-5 April 2000. Ideally, the Turkish delegation would also include an NGO delegate (representing DHKD), and possibly representatives of the General Directorate of National Parks, Game & Wildlife (being involved in the management of at least seven out of the nine Turkish Ramsar Sites), of the Authority for Protected Special Areas (covering at least one Ramsar Site), and the State Hydraulic Works.

Turkey can provide an important showcase on wetland conservation and wise use for the eastern Mediterranean region and is ideally placed to forge links with the Black Sea region, which is becoming increasingly interested in the development of a MedWet-type regional initiative. At a later stage, Turkey could also provide its experience and know-how for wetland conservation to Central Asian Turk states.

## Capacity building for Ramsar Site managers

Two staff of the General Directorate for Environmental Protection are currently receiving in-depth training in the Netherlands during the six-weeks international course on wetland management. Tour du Valat will try to obtain a financial contribution from the French Ministry of the Environment to assist the Turkish authorities in designing and implementing the national wetland management planning methodology. This assistance would consist of:

1. A study tour in France for representatives of Turkish organisations involved in wetland management (Ministry of Environment [GDEP], Ministry of Forestry [GDNP],

APSA and DHKD) to visit sites and meet managers who have designed and implemented management plans under various conditions.

2. Technical support to these organisations for the elaboration of the Turkish methodology for management planning.

3. Technical expertise for the training course to be held at lakes Uluabat and Manyas in April/May 2000.

## Utilisation and dissemination of MedWet tools

It was strongly suggested that the Turkish authorities contact the Portuguese Institute for Nature Conservation to transfer the MedWet Database for wetland inventory and monitoring and to receive subsequent training for its use. This should be complemented by the application of the method to selected Ramsar Sites, the improvement of their management and the establishment of monitoring procedures in a first phase. And, at a later stage, the wider application of the method throughout Turkey, the use of its results to establish a National Policy on Wetlands, incorporating other pertinent MedWet tools. In parallel, training needs of key authorities at national and local level would be analysed and subsequently specific training sessions held.

## Visit of the Kizilirmak Delta Ramsar Site

Was organised by the General Directorate for Environmental Protection, with participation of the local staff of the State Hydraulic Works. DHKD undertook in the past different studies to serve as a baseline for the future management of the site, and produced and disseminated materials to raise the public awareness about this exceptional site hosting an impressive biodiversity, a consequence of its many different natural habitats of large extent, functioning as an important breeding, wintering and stop-over site for migratory birds, and providing the resources for many traditional forms of socio-economic uses (temporarily flooded grazing swamps, lagoon fishing, etc.). It is therefore strongly suggested that an integrated management plan for the area will be elaborated and implemented through the creation of a local management committee.

**Meetings:** Ministry of the Environment, Authority for Protected Special Areas, Ministry of Forestry, State Hydraulic Works, Representation of the European Commission, Dogal Hayat Koruma Demegi (DHKD).