

THEORETIC INFORMATION SUPPORTING THE PRESENTATION, KUŞCENNETİ/BIRD PARADISE NATIONAL PARK, TÜRKİYE:

Introduction of Manyas Lake & Its Surroundings:

Manyas Lake is one of the lakes with the highest biodiversity in Türkiye with its different ecological characteristics, living environments, climate conditions and rich food resources. Although different numbers are given at different times, the highest number of bird species recorded around the lake is 273. In the last period, this number was recorded as 240.

Every year, tens of thousands of birds spend the winter in the lake. Hundreds of thousands of birds stop by here during their annual migrations, feed, rest and continue on their way.

Lake Manyas is the most important breeding ground for standing brooding birds in Türkiye. Every year, 3-4 thousand pairs of birds brood in the area. It is possible to see 30-40 thousand of these birds at the same time in May-June when they hatch.

The lake is also rich in plankton and bottom creatures, and this wealth feeds wildlife.

In addition to birds, 34 fish species have been encountered in the lake so far. Some of these are endemic to the region.

In addition to these, a wide variety of mammals and invertebrates have been identified in the area. 48 mammal species have been identified around the lake, including jackals, foxes, hedgehogs, martens, otters, wild cats, and jungle cats. In addition to these, 25 invertebrate species have been identified within the lake ecosystem. The lake shores are also very rich in worms.

92 plant species belonging to 34 families have been identified in the lake and its immediate surroundings. The dominant species is willow.

History of Bird Paradise/Kuşcenneti National Park:

“...now I see that the palaces I inherited from my father, as well as the park where I was happy, full of trees and game, have been destroyed and burned”. II.Pharnabazos, 395 BC.

“The Bird Paradise must be protected by every possible measure. This is a conscientious duty in the biological and cultural area of the country and in the face of international nature protection movement that is increasing day by day.” Curt Koswig, 1950.

Information about Manyas Kuşçenneti National Park (as a National Park):

-It is located 18 km south of Bandırma District of Balıkesir Province.

-It was established in 1959 as a National Park to protect the breeding areas of birds.

-It is the 4th declared National Park and only one having Council of Europe’ A Class Protected Areas Diploma.

-It is the smallest National Park in Türkiye.

-When it was first established, it was only an area of 52 hectares; in 1975, 12 hectares were added to this area through expropriation, making the area 64 hectares in size. With a decision taken in 2005, the borders of the area were expanded from 64 hectares to 24.000 hectares.

-Kuşçenneti National Park is managed and controlled by the Kuşçenneti National Park Chiefdom of the General Directorate of Nature Protection and National Parks of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

- There are 2 deltas in Kuşçenneti National Park, namely “Sığircı Delta” and “Kocaçay Delta”, and these deltas are absolute protection areas and no activities are allowed.

-Kuşçenneti National Park also includes the Ramsar area, which is under special protection due to the International Convention for the Protection of Wetlands (Ramsar Convention), is 24.020 hectares. The Ramsar Area is also managed and controlled by the Bandırma Chiefdom of the General Directorate of Nature Protection and National Parks of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

- The Long Term Development and Wetland Management Plan of Kuşçenneti National Park approved in 2019 and it is still in force.

-Kuşçenneti National Park Chiefdom has 11 permanent personnel. In the area;

1 Chief (Veterinarian),

1 Forestry Engineer,

1 Technician responsible for the Wildlife,

1 Forest Protection Officer,

1 Office Personnel,

There are 6 workers, including 1 driver and 5 agricultural workers and there is no temporary staff. Those workers were chosen from the local people.

-There are 266 bird species in Kuşçenneti, mainly water birds. Among the bird species, the "Dutchy Pelican" and "White-headed Duck" are among the endangered species according to the IUCN criteria.

-There is a National Species Action Plan for the "Dutchy Pelican" prepared in 2019 and revised in 2024.

-There is a Multi-Species Action Plan for 5 duck species (White-headed Duck, Common Pochard, Ferruginous Pochard, Velvet Duck and Summer Duck).

-The White-headed Duck is monitored within the scope of National Biodiversity Monitoring Studies and is reported to the General Directorate of Nature Protection and National Parks located in Ankara in 3-month periods.

-On the other hand, reporting on the implementation of Species Action Plans is done on a 6-months or annual basis.

-Kuşçenneti National Park has its own budget.

-The number of local and foreign visitors, profile of the visitors and their satisfaction level are measured and recorded regularly by the Kuşçenneti National Park Chiefdom.

Kuşçenneti National Park, Stakeholder Partnerships:

-International Bandırma Bird Paradise Culture and Tourism Festival has been organized annually by the Bandırma Municipality since 1987 in order to introduce the Kuşçenneti

National Park to the big numbers of people and to draw public attention to the dangers faced due to the environmental pollution.

-The Festival draws its inspiration from the wonders of nature, the legacy of the past to the future, the Kuşçenneti National Park, which has a Council of Europe' Protected Areas A Class Diploma, and the beauties of the ancient city located within the area called as Daskyleion, a magical civilization in the heart of nature..

-The archaeological remains found are exhibited in Bandırma Archaeological Museum and studies related to the ancient city are carried out by the Provincial Directorate of Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

-The waste water channel located under the foundation of the Daskyleion palace shows the conscious sensitivity of the people living here 2700 years ago to their environment and nature.

Tourism and Visitor Management:

-Average of 80.000 people visit Kuşçenneti National Park annually.

-There is no accommodation or food services in Kuşçenneti National Park, however there is a guest house in Kuşçenneti Village, 1 km. away from the National Park. On the other hand, visitors can also stay in the districts of Bandırma or Manyas. There may also be people staying in tents or caravans.

-Visitors can get information about the natural life of the birds and other fauna species in the Area by examining the images get from the cameras around the Lake and watch them via televisions in the Administrative and Visitor Center.

-The area is especially crowded with visitors in April-May.

-Entrance to the National Park is free for children and guests over the age of 65, and a small amount of fee is charged for other guests, as supported by the comments of other guests. Entrance to the areas such as Administrative/Visitor Center, museum and live viewing area in Administrative/Visitor Center and observation tower within the National Park is free.

- Within the scope of the results of Bandırma University' academic research conducted in 2023, which took into account the individuals who commented on Kuşçenneti National Park on the TripAdvisor Platform;
- It can be stated that individuals who visited Kuşçenneti National Park and shared their visits are mostly from Istanbul and Balıkesir.
- Kuşçenneti National Park has received an average visitor score as 4.01/5 on TripAdvisor Platform. This score coincides with the results of visitor satisfaction surveys conducted by the Kuşçenneti Chiefdom' surveys scored as rate of 78%.
- When looking at the comments of Kuşçenneti, it is possible to say that visitors are generally no bird watchers.
- When looking at the data, the adequacy of binoculars is heavily expressed.
- The museum in the Administrative and Visitor Center is generally considered sufficient, including the variety of fauna.
- While various comments on the hygiene of the National Park environment are positive, some comments state that hygiene is inadequate.
- There are positive views on the personnel on duty in the National Park.
- It is seen that visitors are generally pleased with the naturalness of the National Park area.
- In general, visitors have expressed their satisfaction with the observation tower in the National Park.

A Look Back & Forward:

Discussions related to the fight against polluting factors threatening Kuşçenneti National Park, issues specified in the Long-Term Development and Wetland Management Plan, which is still in force, however have not yet been implemented (such as increasing the number of personnel in the Area Chiefdom etc.), and beliefs due to the insufficiency of income generated by the tourism activities especially for the local people are going on.

