

### Ecological character

The wetland is located in a fully mastered agricultural zone. This circumstance is an important factor making for high concentration of geese and ducks migrating in autumn. Vast fields with grain crops surrounding lakes are their main feeding stations at this period.

Kulykol stretches from north to south for 10 km with maximum width of 4.9 km. In case of high filling the average depth of water is about 2 m, maximum – up to 4 m. Shores of the lake are edged with reeds (*Phragmites australis*) with locally developed communities of cattail, rush (*Bolboshoenus maritimus*) and water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*). The shores of the southern part of the lake are open with wide shallow waters. Large reed tracts and separate "islands" are also scattered over the entire water area of the lake. Open parts of water are covered with hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), pondgrass (*Potamogeton lucens*, *P. perfoliatus*, *P. pectinatus*) and meakin (*Myriophyllum spicatum*). In safe places hornwort forms associations with duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*), willow grass (*Polygonum amphibium*) and other plants. Out of charophytes the development of such large species as *Chara tomentosa* is possible.

There are a few islands on the lake. A big high island with bushes of tamarisk, located in the southern part of the lake, serves as a place of nesting for many birds, including colonies of Dalmatian pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus*), Great Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Great Black-headed Gulls (*Ichthyaeus ichthyatus*) and Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), while Gull-billed and Common Terns (*Sterna nilotica*, *S. hirundo*) make their colonies on the low spit.

Drying parts of the lake get overgrown with glasswort, which changes into annual saltwort- glasswort belt (*Salicornia europaea*, species *p. Suaeda*) and halophytic motley grass communities (*Limonium otolepis*, *Frankenia hirsuta*). On the shore ridge there are bushes of tamarisk, settlements of marsh-beets (*Limonium gmelinii*, *L. caspium*) and annual saltwort. Large areas of the terrace are occupied with *Kalidium foliatum* communities that alternate with halophytic cereal meadows (*Leymus ramosus*) and *Leymus ramosus*-fescue communities. Western slopes of the lake hollow descend in some places almost down to the shoreline. Here bushes of motley grasses (*Medicago romanica*, *Melilotus dentatus*) are spread along the shores and couch grass meadows (*Elytrigia repens*) can be also observed. If go higher they are replaced by complexes of sagebrush (*Artemisia pausiflora*) and *Festuca valesiaca*, *Stipa sareptana* communities.

Taldykol lake with the area of about 11.2 sq. km. is located in 2.3 km to the east from the northern edge of Kulykol and has almost an ideal round form. Major part of the water area of the lake is covered with reed bushes of floodplain and mosaic type. Halophytic grain meadows and *Artemisia nitrosa* communities are widely spread around the lake. From the northern and south-western side there are parts of water couch-grass meadows, which turn into marshes at the high water level.