

12. Kus Golu Lake – Turkey



Kus, (Manyas) Lake, located in the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara, between the Uluabat and Biga peninsulas, supports a wide range of biodiversity. Lying on a migratory water-bird route, it hosts more than three million birds every year, 255 species of which nest in the region. With its favourable mild climate conditions, the site is a suitable shelter for birds throughout the year. The delta, formed by the Sigirci rivulet, is one of the most important breeding areas in the country. The wetland also constitutes an ideal environment for insects, worms, frogs and fish, which are necessary for the feeding of birds. A wide variety of plants also grows there –around the lake there are reed, rush and meadow areas– and the region is considered to be the most heavily vegetated part of the coastal region.

It is estimated that the region was first inhabited around 4000 BC. From excavations currently in progress, archaeological evidence was brought to light from the first Bronze Age. During the ensuing centuries, the land was populated by the Bithynians, Lydians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines and the Ottomans, until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. On the southern lake shore, the archaeological site of Daskyleion, a Roman settlement, can be found.

During the past two centuries, the region was populated by a group of immigrants from various parts of Europe. Orthodox Christian Cossacks, coming from southern Russia, after migrating first to the Danube Delta, brought with them the knowledge of commercial fishing and in the late 19th century Ottoman Muslims from the Balkans arrived and settled in the northern shore of the lake. Later on, Pomaks from a village near Kavala, Greece, were relocated around the lake and lately, at the beginning of the 20th century, another flow of immigrants arrived from the

Caucasus. All these different groups of people from diverse backgrounds not only live in harmony but, adopting new strategies providing their subsistence, are interacting and learning from one another.

Cossacks commercialised fishing, and gradually introduced the traditional sophisticated method of group fishing. Nowadays, the method of vole and fanyaly' are practised, while other traditional fishing methods are the pinter, a basket-like trap device, the basma and ky' yy' y' ry' by' (the last two are now prohibited).

The quality of the land has permitted the cultivation of wheat, sunflowers, corn, pulses, fruits, vegetables, olives, sugar beet, cotton and barley. Although cultivation in inundated lands was always risky, it has also been rewarding to farmers. Hunting has always been important for the population and in more recent years two methods were practised, open-air shooting and the *güme*, a hunter's blind, a little hut constructed from wire and cotton, sheltering the hunter from detection by birds. Although the *güme* has been banned by law, some people still use this traditional hunting practice.

In the park, there is a visitors' centre and an observation tower. Every year, the area is visited by thousands of naturalists, bird watchers, scientists and researchers. Pilot courses for wetland managers have been held and many schools organise educational tours in the area.