The Ulir River channel and floodplain landscape is a unique environment that depends entirely on the moisture, hydrological regime, quantity and quality of water brought to the Ulir River by its numerous tributaries. The Ulir River is Europe’s only river with irregular middle and southern reaches. The deltaic site is formed by the Ulir River meandering in Bakhasha mountains. In its lower reaches the river branches into a number of arms and channels forming an extensive delta. Delta wetlands form a complex system of channels, lakes, swamps and soggy lowlands densely covered with plants. 47 fish species and subspecies live in the lower reaches of the river including 5 species included in the Red Book of Kazakhstan. The so-called anomalous species migrating from the Caspian Sea into the Ulir River delta for reproduction purposes form a special biological community. This area is important for migratory birds at the West Siberian-Caspian site of Siberian-East African migratory corridor, which supports millions of aquatic and semiaquatic birds during nesting, molting, seasonal migrations and wintering. In order to conserve and restore the Ulir River delta's unique natural complexes of particular environmental, historic, scientific, aesthetic and recreational value, the Government issued Resolution No. 119-d dated February 6, 2009, “On Some Issues of Establishment of State Institution “Akzhayik State Nature Reserve” to set up on the basis of Zholokonov’s husbandry, Akzhayik State Nature Reserve, a protected area enjoying the status of a nature protection and recreation area, including natural and water ecosystems intended for protecting, restoring and maintaining biological diversity of the Ulir River Delta and adjacent Caspian Coast natural complexes at an area of 111,500 ha. DESCRIPTION OF ECOREGIONS Route 1 ‘Nature World’ A special interest car route for groups of 20 to 30 people. Weekly. Route points: Almaty - Zhanatnala - Dambra - Abyruy - Abyruy. Open on April 15 - July 1. The group includes 12 young students. Buses depart at 10 a.m. from Abyruy to Dambra Village. Students are accompanied by young guides. 3-day tour. While on the route, school children will be told about the history of the area, the plant and procedures for fishing in the Ulir River and will learn about the fish biology. Standing at the opposite side of the river bank on the roadside, children can see the fishing sites. On the route, a 45-minute stop will be made in Zhanatnala Village for visiting a khovaghul (a single hunter) site. An experienced guide will tell children about and demonstrate falconry. Students will go to Dambra Village. Tourists will visit the observation deck to watch birds with the help of field guides. We will have a chance to talk about plant life, livestock (Clydeside cow, common and little egret, common heron, wading-birds, brown coot, seagull, gannet, steppe lark) are quite widespread in Zhanetnala river floodplain. At the monitoring station, the guide will provide insight into the diversity of grasses, shrubs, trees and aquatic flora. Aquatic vegetation is represented by reed, narrow and broad-leaved cattail, common bulrush and sea club-rush. Coastal vegetation includes salt-tolerant shrubs, bearberry, eleagnus (a medicinal plant), licorice, couch grass, shoregrass, xanthium, plantain, dandelion, marigold and more. A breakfast (children should bring box breakfast from home) and demonstration of postcard features boasting of biodiversity of the project site will be arranged. Route 2 ‘Water World’ A car and water route, in groups of up to 10 people. Weekly. Route points: Abyruy - Peschyny Village - Caspian coast - Abyruy. Open on July 15 - September 15. A tour will be completed 4 p.m. The route is designed for all tourists willing to visit the water area of Akzhayik SNR. At 10 a.m. tourists will depart from Abyruy to Dambra Village by road. At the 7th section of the road between Dambra and Peschyny villages they will have a chance to watch typical habitats of aquatic and semi-aquatic birds (beaver, grey heron, black and white ibis, common egret, comorant). The guide will tell tourists about biology of birds. Upon arrival at Peschyny Village, tourists will be offered tea. Then, accompanied by the guide, they will take a boat ride along the dug channel (1 km long) into the water area. During the ride, the tourist will be told about bird nesting grounds, avifauna biology, vegetation and importance of the protected area. During the tour visitors will observe pelicans, bald-crows, red-breasted pochards, swans and their brood using field glasses and telescopes. They will learn about ecology (food, native and introduced species) of the Caspian Sea. The guide will tell them about the history of landscapes and protected bird species. On their way, tourists can watch interesting and picturesque ‘lunar landscape’ with salt marshes and a drying-up salt lake. The tour is open to the general public, but advance booking is required. A tour costs about 200 USD for an group of 5 people. The guide will tell them about the reserve’s flora and fauna diversity. It will be followed by a light dinner and departure for Abyruy by road. Rules of Tourists’ Conduct at Ecoregions One or more people can take a course in the security zone if accompanied by a security inspector or a state witness. No deviations from the route shall be permitted. - Tourists are prohibited to disturb birds (make noises, shout, talk loudly, use voices; one must always stay close to the accompanying inspector), to walk around, to feed birds and feathered animals. - No fires can be made using gasoline or gas devices; no open flames shall be allowed. - It shall not be allowed to cut and pull bushes, reeds and other plants during the tour. - No glassware can be left in the site as it may set the plastic cover on fire in case of windy, hot and dry weather. - Visitors must clean after themselves and dispose of garbage and household waste in designated garbage sites. - Nothing shall be allowed in designated sites. - To prevent a heat stroke, no person shall remain in the open air for a long time unless the weather is cool. - Watch out for Orion’s pig!