

Rives du Lac Léman //



RAMSAR
SITE NUMBER
519



Area :
1 915 ha

Date of designation :
April 8th 1991

Coordinates :
46° 21' N 06° 23' E

Summary

With its 167 km of shoreline and its maximum depth of 309 m, Lake Geneva is a veritable inland sea. All the characteristics of a marine shoreline can be found on its banks: marina and fishing harbor, lake dunes, delta, migration route and refuge area for birdlife. The Ramsar site is composed of several distinct areas of the shores of Lake Geneva: alluvial terraces, islands, shores, reed beds, and parts of the rivers Dranse, Redon, Foron and Vion.

International importance

Lake Geneva is the largest lake in the Alps and as such constitutes a unique and remarkable ecosystem. It is, on a European scale, a major stopover for migratory and wintering water birds since it is the second wintering area in France after the Camargue. Every winter, tens of thousands of birds stay there (coots, ducks, loons, grebes). The lake serves as a stopover for a large number of migratory birds (sandpipers, sandpipers, godwits, gravelots). It is located on one of the main migration axes of the continent. Its banks are thus occasionally visited by most of the species of the European avifauna.

General location

The site is located on the French-Swiss border, but only on the French banks of Lake Geneva, between Geneva and Evian les Bains.



Services provided by wetlands

Wetlands provide many services to humans, including supply (food via fishing in particular, fresh water), regulation and prevention of exceptional events (capture of pollutants, water retention during floods and water release during droughts), or cultural and social services (landscape quality, recreational and educational role). They are also biodiversity hotspots, participating in the biological cycle of many species (reception and parking area, dormitory, feeding or reproduction). The richness and diversity of benefits provided by wetlands are closely linked to the quality of ecosystems, hence the importance of preserving them.



Adverse factors

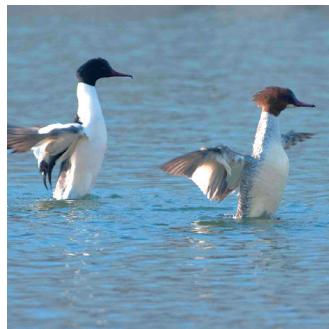
The main human activities on the site are fishing (professional and leisure) and tourism (swimming, navigation, thermalism). The climate and the beauty of the landscapes of the lake and its shores make it a very popular vacation spot. Urbanization is the greatest threat to the shores of Lake Geneva. Its French shoreline has virtually no natural features left. Urbanization and the development of nautical activities are the main causes. Embankments, walls, constructions, harbour and beach developments denature the shores. This has as an immediate consequence the disappearance of reedbeds. Because of the disappearance of their habitats, less and less birds come to nest there.

Four species representative of the site



BLACK KITE
(*Milvus migrans*)

Lake Geneva is home to one of the largest populations of black kites in Europe. This raptor, rather scavenger, is a specialist in the rendering of dead fish in the lake. It is a breeding species present from March to the beginning of August during the reproduction period.



COMMON MERGANSER
(*Mergus merganser*)

The common merganser gets its name from its reputation of eating a large quantity of fish. It breeds only in five French departments, including Haute-Savoie, which is home to 95% of its French population. It is the only water bird of our regions to install its nest in cavities, in particular in old trees. The ducklings are nidifuges, so they jump out of the cavity before arriving in the water.



LITTORELLAR
(*Littorella uniflora*)

Protected species at the national level, it is a small plant (5 to 10 cm high) very discrete of the banks of lakes. It meets on sandy or gravelly substrates, in the not very deep waters. Formerly present in various points, this littorella disappeared except for a natural station. It was the subject of a reintroduction in 2016.



EURASIAN BEAVER
(*Castor fiber*)

The Eurasian beaver is the largest rodent in Europe. Strictly vegetarian, it feeds on bark, leaves and young shoots of woody plants, hydrophytes, fruits, tubers and grasses. Its daily needs amount to 2 kg of plant matter or 700 g of bark! Nocturnal and very discreet, it leaves, on the other hand, many traces of its passages: gnawed trees, prints and slides... Keep your eyes open!



Biodiversity

Every year, from december to april, thousands of birds come to spend the winter on the shores of Lake Geneva. It hosts, in winter, populations of water birds exceeding 20,000 individuals: great crested grebe, tufted duck, common pochard and common goldeneye. Three species represent more than 1% of the regional biogeographical population in winter: tufted duck, common goldeneye and gosander.

The site is also home to numerous mammals such as the beaver or the dormouse, as well as a varied flora: high altitude plants, southern species, orchids, centuries-old oak and hornbeam forests, and boxwoods. Fish are not left out; three remarkable species frequent the area: the Arctic char, the whitefish and the lake trout. The downstream parts of the rivers of the site constitute the spawning grounds of the latter.



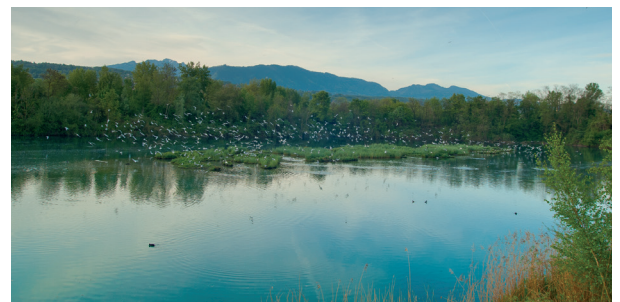
Management and conservation

Different management and conservation levers coexist and complement each other on the site. Thus we find: a natural reserve, a Natura 2000 site, two hunting reserves, a listed site, two classified sites.

Through the Natura 2000 site of Lake Geneva, managed by Thonon Agglomération, and the national nature reserve of the Dranse delta, managed by the Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels de Haute-Savoie, various management measures are carried out to preserve, restore or maintain the natural environments included in the Ramsar site.

We can mention in particular:

- the reinforcement of coastal habitats, where rare aquatic reedbeds on the French coast were already present;
- the maintenance of the islet of the pond of Saint Disdille to support the nesting of the avifauna within the natural reserve;
- restoration of various wetlands.



The Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, commonly known as the Ramsar Convention, is a global inter-governmental treaty that provides the frame-work for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It is the only global treaty to focus on one single ecosystem.