

# Grande Brière //



RAMSAR  
SITE NUMBER  
**713**



FRANCE

Area :  
**19 500 ha**

Date of designation :  
**February 1<sup>st</sup> 1995**

Coordinates :  
**47° 22' N 02° 10' W**

## Summary

The Grande Brière, mostly peaty, constitutes a vast floodable expanse of fresh or, locally, brackish water. These marshes are composed of a mosaic of natural habitats entangled and distributed according to the topography, the duration of flooding, a gradient of halophilia and human activities.

To the east of the site, the marshes are mainly exploited for breeding. To the west, the longest flooded depression of the Grande Brière Mottière marsh extends, an undivided and inalienable property of the inhabitants of the 21 communes.

Natural flooded meadows, reedbeds, woodlands and wet moors, flat peat bogs, mounds and islands, canals and shallow bodies of water make up the bulk of the landscape and form a whole of extreme ecological wealth.

## International importance

The Brière marshes are one of the main marshy areas of the French Atlantic coast. They have major assets to support a great diversity of animal and plant species.

The Grande Brière is a territory of great importance for water birds' reproduction, migration and wintering.

In terms of flora, this is a vast reservoir of remarkable communities and protected species.

This site is at the forefront in ensuring the conservation of rare species of community interest such as the Eurasian bittern, the black tern or the bluethroat for birds, the thorelle for plants or the Eurasian otter for mammals.

## General location

This Ramsar site is located entirely in the Loire-Atlantique department, in its northwestern part, between the Loire and Vilaine estuaries.



Grande  
Brière

## Services provided by wetlands

The wetlands of the Brière play a definite role in controlling floods and purifying water in the area. In addition to its essential function as a reservoir for numerous species of threatened fauna and flora and its vocation as a biodiversity conservatory, the Grande Brière Ramsar site is an economic support for various professional activities: agricultural breeding, recovery of extracted silt, crafts based on products from the marsh and tourist activities.

From a social and cultural point of view, Man has shaped this environment, maintaining strong links of appropriation and use with it, as evidenced by the hunting, fishing, boating and farming activities still practiced today.



## Adverse factors

The natural resources remain vulnerable and affected by the evolution of the relationship between man and his environment on the territory.

The retreat of agriculture on the marsh, the closing of the environment, the silting up of the marsh, urban pressure and fragmentation of the territory, local filling in, the development of invasive exotic species, and the degradation of water quality are all threats to which the managers must respond.



## Four species representative of the site



**EURASIAN BITTERN**  
(*Botaurus stellaris*)

The Eurasian bittern is a stocky heron that breeds and lives in reed beds. Its population has been steadily declining in France over the last few decades. The large reedbeds of Brière, a predominant element of the landscape, still host one of the main breeding populations of this now threatened species. The population of Brière marshes would thus constitute the last stable population in the west of France.



**FALSE THORUS CRESSON**  
(*Caropsis verticillato-inundata*)

The false thorus cresson is a small plant of about ten centimeters in height which lives in the open environments flooded in winter and remaining wet in summer. This species, endemic to Western Europe, is protected in France and considered to be of community interest. The Brière, and mainly its amphibious lawns, constitutes a site of great importance for the conservation of this species.



**EURASIAN OTTER**  
(*Lutra lutra*)

The Brieron marshes are among the historical bastions of the species in the region. This emblematic aquatic carnivore has experienced a positive demographic dynamic since its protection, which favors the reconquest of the hydrographic network, notably from the Brière source population. Discreet and secretive, very often, only the proofs and prints that it leaves behind its passage testify of its presence.



**BLACK TERN**  
(*Chlidonias niger*)

This black tern, protected and considered of community interest, can be recognized by its characteristic light and graceful flight. It nests in colonies on the flooded meadows of Brière, a site that can host up to 80% of the French breeding pairs. It is not uncommon to observe it fishing above the water bodies and canals in company of the moustac tern, another species that the Brière welcomes in great numbers.



## Biodiversity

Site water and land landscapes mosaic, punctuated by alternating periods of flooding and exodus, constitutes a reservoir of wildlife where many species live together. Flooded in spring, the natural meadows are used by birds to nest or feed, or by fish to spawn.

The immense reedbeds of the Brière are home to large numbers of birds which find here the conditions necessary for their reproduction. At the end of the summer and in the fall, the Brière marshes offer a migratory stopover for migrants from the north who find the food resources necessary for their survival.

At this time, the conditions offered to the exondation benefit the expression of an original and diversified flora. In winter, the flooded landscapes offer to the wintering anatidae and limicolae, complementary feeding and resting areas.



## Management and conservation

The Ramsar site covers the Natura 2000 site "Grande Brière - Marais de Donges" (SAC and SPA), the registered site of Grande Brière, the Regional Nature Reserve of the Marais de Brière, sensitive natural areas of the Loire-Atlantique department, areas concerned by the Littoral law and ZNIEFF (Natural zone of ecological interest, fauna and flora). In its daily missions, the Regional Nature Park strives to deploy measures for the conservation of its biological heritage by restoring environments of ecological interest (Natura 2000), by supporting extensive agriculture (Agri-environment-climate measures - AECM, Valeur Parc), by maintaining and restoring ecological continuities, by developing knowledge on biodiversity to better understand its preservation, by federating the actors involved in the fight against invasive alien species, etc.



### 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.