**Summary**

Somme bay Ramsar site includes two sub-sites: the littoral zone and the backwaters. The combination of the geomorphological context and the ancient action of Man who, by means of dykes, has extended the terrestrial domain to the detriment of the marine environment, determines a considerable variety of environments. Mudflats, white and grey dunes, peaty marshes, reedbeds, meadows and humid bocage, ponds and ditches, artificial water bodies resulting from the exploitation of aggregates, etc. follow one another.

**International importance**

Several vulnerable species at the European level have been recorded as parking, wintering or breeding, including the Eurasian spoonbill, the Eurasian bittern and the pied avocet. The site is home to the largest colony of common seals in France and a growing number of grey seals. It is also a nursery area for sea bass and various other fish species; it is also very important for elvers (young eels). The site is home to nearly 400 rare and/or endangered plant species.

**General location**

This Ramsar site is located in Hauts-de-France (formerly Picardie), in the department of Somme.

**Services provided by wetlands**

The landscapes and the natural character of the site attract many tourists every year. Nature tourism complements the services historically provided by the local wetlands: breeding, fishing on board or on foot, mussel farming. The Somme estuary is considered as an open-air factory where the multiple natural productions of shellfish, shrimps and marine plants are the basis of supply services that support hundreds of inhabitants. Hunting is also widely practiced and has helped maintain many wetlands.

**Adverse factors**

The inevitable silting up of the estuary modifies the ecological balance. The mudflats disappear (and therefore also the invertebrates that the shorebirds feed on) and are replaced by unproductive sandy areas or by salt meadow vegetation. Rising sea levels may lead to submergence of land often below sea level, which could greatly alter current ecosystems. Freshwater marshes are under threat from invasive species, such as Helms’ cress, which clogs ponds and shallow water bodies. The difficulties experienced for several years by the livestock industry has led to a decrease in wet meadows, which support a remarkable biodiversity. The frequentation of Somme bay exerts a pressure on the natural environments, which led to the labeling of the site as a "Grand Site de France", practically on the same surface as the Ramsar site.
Biodiversity

Great mosaic of environments allows the existence of a remarkable biological diversity. Many sensitive species find refuge on this site, which constitutes for some of them their stronghold at the regional or even national level. The exceptional character of the site is reflected by the ornithological richness which reaches approximately 370 species counted during the last two centuries on the whole of the Picardy maritime plain.

33 generic habitats falling under the Habitats, Fauna and Flora Directive are present in the Ramsar area, five of which are of priority community interest.

Management and conservation

The site is rich in administrative conservation measures: a national nature reserve, a regional nature reserve, six hunting reserves, three biotope protection decrees, two classified sites, two registered sites, a natural marine park, a regional natural park in the process of being created, two special conservation areas (Habitats Directive), two special protection areas (Birds Directive), several hundred hectares acquired by the Conservatoire du littoral, and a few dozen hectares acquired by the Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage.

The management of the sites is essentially ensured by the Syndicat mixte Baie de Somme - Grand Littoral Picard, and on lesser surfaces, by the Conservatoire d’espaces naturels de Picardie and the Fédération départementale des chasseurs de la Somme.

Management is made possible by financial contributions from the European Union, the State, the Artois-Picardy Water Agency, the Hauts-de-France Region and the Somme Department. A wetlands unit has been set up by the aforementioned Syndicat mixte to facilitate the application of the Ramsar management plan and to animate a dynamic favorable to the conservation of 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 framework 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.