



RAMSAR SITE
NUMBER
1269

Marais du Fiers d'Ars //



FRANCE

Area :
4 452 ha

Date of designation :
February 2nd 2003

Coordinates :
46 ° 13' N 01 ° 28' W

Summary

This vast coastal area of 4,452 ha combines, on the one hand, the large mudflats and sandbanks discovered at low tide of the Fier d'Ars and the Fosse de Loix and, on the other hand, a set of dyked marshes, former polders built between the fifteenth and nineteenth century. This site forms a very diverse wetlands mosaic: active or neglected salt marshes, soft bulrush and reed marshes, aquaculture ponds and shellfish farming. It also includes wooded areas and dunes, as well as a set of muddy, rocky and sandy foreshores.

International importance

The whole site, located on the great East Atlantic Flyway, is an area of international importance for migrating and wintering waterbirds, some of which find favorable conditions for breeding. The Ile de Ré is home to internationally important numbers of several species such as the Dark-bellied Goose or the Eurasian Spoonbill, and the threshold of 20,000 wintering shorebirds is reached almost every year. This site is also classified for the quality of its landscapes, the rarity of its habitats and the flora species that develop there. In addition, it is home to a diverse fauna very specific to the wetlands mosaic ranging from the foreshore, through the salt marshes to freshwater areas.

General location

This Ramsar site is located in the northwest of the Isle of Ré, straddling the communes of Loix, La Couarde-sur-Mer, Arsen- Ré, Saint-Clément-des-Baleines and Les Portes-en-Ré.



Marais du Fiers d'Ars

Services provided by wetlands

Beyond their role as a support for biodiversity, for many species of fauna and flora, the Fier d'Ars marshes play an important role as a buffer zone against the risks of marine submersion, by slowing down the submersion wave and promoting the sweeping of submerged areas via hydraulic structures. They also contribute to the tourist influence of the island, and to its economic development, by offering exceptional landscapes where professional activities and natural spaces mix.

Historically, they have been the seat of traditional economic activities, such as salt production, oyster and fish farming, which, through regular maintenance of the marshes and extensive management, contribute to the expression and preservation of this exceptional biodiversity, protection against submersion, as well as the development of tourist and leisure activities.

Adverse factors

One of the most important threats to the site is over-visitation linked to the tourist attraction of the island. The general public can easily access the natural areas, which are one of the assets highlighted on the Ile de Ré. In addition, there is a wide range of outdoor leisure activities (paddle, fat bike, ULM (Ultra-Light Motorized aeroplane), fishing, horseback riding, etc.) which encourages the presence of the general public on the site. However, all local players are mobilized to channel and supervise the use of natural spaces.

Another unfavorable factor for the site is the presence of invasive species: Baccharis, Garlic, Yucca, Pampas grass, etc. Management actions are carried out throughout the site to limit the development of these species.



Four species representative of the site



WESTERN SPADEFOOT
(*Pelobates cultripes*)

The Cultriped Pelobate is a plump amphibian of about ten centimeters at most. Its main physical characteristic is the presence of black tubers under its hind legs called knives, which allow it to dig to burrow itself into the ground. It is also recognizable by its protruding eyes and its peculiar singing, which resembles a cackling sound. The Fier d'Ars site has one of the most beautiful populations of the Atlantic coast estimated at nearly 450 individuals.



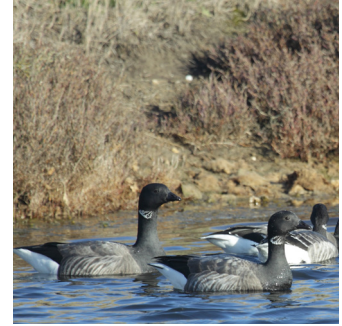
DWARF EELGRASS
(*Zostera noltii*)

Zostera noltii (known by the common name dwarf eelgrass) is a seagrass that grows on the muddy foreshore in the heart of the Pier d'Ars. It flowers between June and September, and anchors itself in the sediment thanks to its rhizome. It forms a fairly dense herbarium creating a habitat favorable to many species for their reproduction, but also an important food resource for many birds.



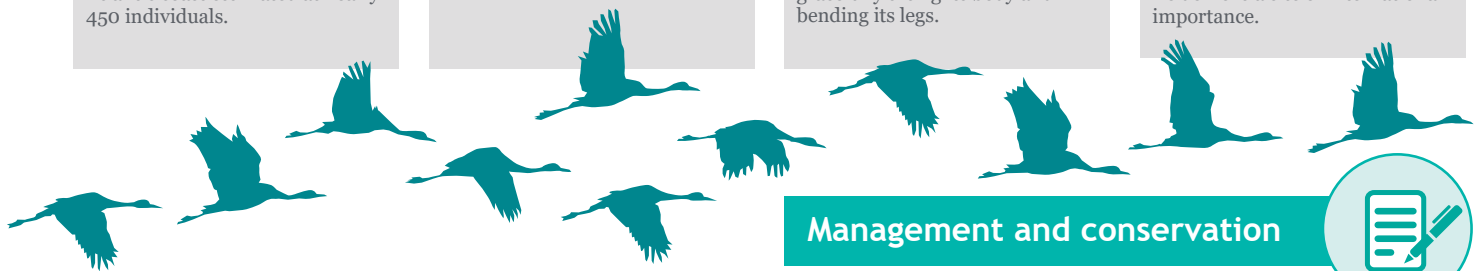
BLACK-WINGED STILT
(*Himantopus himantopus*)

With its large red legs and black and white plumage, the stilt resembles a miniature stork. Present in the salt marshes of the island from March to August, about a hundred couples nest there, making the Ramsar site of the Ile de Ré a site of national importance. It spends the rest of the year in Africa. It moves in shallow water and delicately pecks insects, aquatic larvae, small molluscs and crustaceans, gracefully tilting its body and bending its legs.



BRANT GOOSE
(*Branta bernicla*)

Coming straight from Siberia where it breeds, this little sea goose is present on the Ile de Ré from October to March. It feeds on marine plants (eelgrass, ruppia) and green algae. Present in large numbers (between 8,000 and 12,000 individuals depending on the winter), it frequents the rocky foreshore, mudflats, reservoir basins mud and some grassy bumps (earth levees) of salt marshes. For this species, the Ile de Ré is a site of international importance.



Management and conservation



The Fier d'Ars site has a range of perimeters that enhance its ecological importance: IBAs, type 1 and type 2 ZNIEFFs, Natura 2000 sites (SACs, SPAs), classified sites, listed sites, the Lilleau des Niges National Nature Reserve, state forests under ONF management, etc. In addition, the Coastal protection agency is pursuing a very active land-acquisition policy on plots with high environmental stakes, for which the Ile de Ré Community of Communes is involved as manager: cleaning of wild deposits, naturalist inventories (odonates, eels, characeae, habitats, amphibians, etc.), drafting of management plans, management of water levels, support for tenants, etc.



Biodiversity

Thanks to their wetlands mosaic, the Fier d'Ars and the Fosse de Loix sites are home to a wide range of very diverse fauna and flora. We can find species and habitats typical of salt marshes (Pied avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), Ruppia, lagoon, salt meadows, etc.), as well as those of sandy foreshores (foreshore, dunes, coastal forests, etc.), muddy foreshores (eelgrass, shellfish, etc.), and brackish wetlands (phragmites, amphibians, odonates (odonata), etc.). This Ramsar site is characterized by its complexity, which is at the source of its richness and international interest.



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.