



RAMSAR SITE
NUMBER
2283

Le Marais breton //

baie de Bourgneuf, île de Noirmoutier et forêt de Monts



FRANCE

Area :
55 826 ha

Date of designation :
February 2nd 2017

Coordonnées :
46 ° 55' N 02 ° 03' W

Summary

The site is a vast wetland of 56,000 ha. On its coastline, the sandy to muddy foreshore shelters eelgrass beds and hermella reefs. The 35,000 ha of marshes, fed by both salt and fresh water, include salt lagoons, wet meadows, numerous ponds and a large network of ditches. This mosaic of habitats is home to a diverse and remarkable flora and fauna and is the support of economic activities, mainly extensive breeding, oyster farming and salt farming.

International importance

The site is one of the main marsh areas of the French Atlantic coast and one of the main bays open at low tide. The site is of international importance for a number of breeding, migrating and wintering birds. In particular, it hosts more than 60,000 waterfowl in winter. In addition, the site is home to several rare and globally threatened species such as the amphibian vole and the European eel.

General location

This Ramsar site is located on the coast of the Pays-de-la-Loire region, bordering the departments of Loire-Atlantique and Vendée.



Adverse factors

The site is threatened by the presence of numerous invasive exotic species such as water primrose and tree ragwort, as well as coypu and muskrat. These species degrade the quality of the water and the environment, trivialize the floral communities and replace native species.

The intensification of agricultural practices (filling in of ponds, drainage, use of fertilizers and pesticides, turning over of meadows, etc.) could lead to the degradation of wet meadows. The agri-environmental measures deployed on the territory make it possible to limit the practices unfavorable to the ecosystem.

The site, which is very touristic in summer, is also the support of numerous leisure activities (recreational fishing, nature sports, etc.). Measures have been taken to raise awareness among practitioners and professionals and to regulate the use of the most sensitive areas (awareness raising, fencing).

Services provided by wetlands

These wetlands help control flooding and purify water. The meadows and the bay are also an important place of biomass production which benefits the breeding, the shellfish farming and the fishing, the main activities of the sector.

In addition, about 400 ha of salt marshes are exploited for salt production. These different marine and terrestrial ecosystems are an important reservoir of biodiversity and also present a strong tourist attraction.

Marais breton,
baie de Bourgneuf,
île de Noirmoutier
et forêt de Monts



Four species representative of the site



PIED AVOCET
(*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

Well present on the 11,000 ha of salt marshes of the site, it is frequently found on the salt marshes where it nests on the clay paths and feeds on mudflats. Preservation of the lagoon habitat is essential for this species. On several sites, islets have been created to encourage its reproduction. Approximately 500 pairs are present. The site is also very important for the wintering of the species.



EUROPEAN EEL
(*Anguilla anguilla*)

Once very present, this species is part of the cultural identity of the Marais Breton, just like the green frog. Now critically endangered worldwide, the needs of this species are taken into account in the maintenance programs of the hydraulic network and during the operation of the many locks present on the marsh. The Marais Breton with its 7,000 km of ditches and its connection with the ocean remains a privileged site for the development of the European eel.



BLACK-TAILED GODWIT
(*Limosa limosa*)

With about a hundred pairs, i.e. 60% of the national population, the Marais Breton is the first French nesting site of this highly threatened species in Europe. The black-tailed godwit appreciates the mosaics of wet meadows grazed and mowed. The flooding of meadows in spring is also essential for the reception of the species. The species is also strongly present in winter. It is the object of an important follow-up locally.



SOUTHWESTERN WATER VOL
(*Arvicola sapidus*)

Less well known than the European otter, which is also present on the site, the southwestern water vole, also called water vole, is an aquatic rodent. A discreet occupant of the marsh, it particularly likes ditches lined with rushes and bulrushes. In the current state of knowledge, it seems that the marshes of the island of Noirmoutier and the Marais Breton constitute one of the bastions of the species in France with high densities.

Biodiversity

Due to the diversity of its environments, the site has many heritage species. The Bourgneuf Bay is home to 45 000 geese, ducks and small waders in winter. The Breton Marsh is the first French nesting site of the white stilt, the redshank, the lapwing but also the short-eared owl and the black-tailed godwit. The site is home to up to 25% of the French breeding populations of Sandwich tern and Mediterranean gulls.

The numerous aquatic environments on the site are also favorable to a great diversity of fish, mollusks and crustaceans. The Breton Marsh is notably a privileged site for the development of the European eel. In addition, the site is home to rare species such as the cultriped pelobate, the large stigma moth or, for plants, Micheli's clover and the rare *Tolipella salina*.



Management and conservation

The Ramsar site covers exactly the Natura 2000 site Breton Marsh, baie de Bourgneuf, île de Noirmoutier et forêt de Monts (SACs and SPAs) including the national nature reserve of the marsh of Müllembourg, the regional nature reserve of the polder of Sébastopol and two classified sites.

The Association for the Development of the Bourgneuf Bay Watershed (ADBVB) and its many partners ensure the preservation of the ecosystems present in this territory, in particular through the management of the Natura 2000 site and the water development and management plan. The tools mobilized (agri-environmental measures, Natura 2000 contracts, awareness campaigns, etc.) make it possible to reconcile human activities and biodiversity preservation in this territory.



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.