

Étang de Salses-Leucate //



RAMSAR SITE
NUMBER
2307



FRANCE

Area :
7 637 ha

Date of designation :
June 30th 2017

Coordinates :
42° 51'N 03° 00'E

Summary

This vast Mediterranean lagoon of 5400 ha is bordered by rich and varied wetlands. Some areas are strongly subjected to salt and have a marineized profile and, conversely, the western part of the pond has a vegetation that belongs to soft environments. A thin strip of sand (the lido) separates the sea from the pond of Salses-Leucate.

International importance

This wetland is characterized as being of international importance, notably for the typicality of its habitats and the diversity and sometimes rarity of the flora and fauna found there. The different fresh or brackish environments allow to welcome very different species.

General location

This Ramsar site is located between the departments of Aude and Pyrénées-Orientales along the Mediterranean coast.



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Services provided by wetlands

These wetlands provide various traditional services such as fishing, hunting, extensive bull breeding (manades). Tourism is also very present with, in parallel to seaside activities, a growing interest in nature activities and the discovery of heritage. These spaces also play a major role in the regulation of floods and the purification of surface water.

Adverse factors

Tourism is an opportunity for the territory and allows to highlight the natural heritage of this lagoon. However, it is important to communicate on the fragility of these environments and the behaviors to observe so that this summer influx does not harm the balance of the site.



Four species representative of the site



GREATER FLAMINGO
(*Phoenicopterus roseus*)

Characteristic species of the Mediterranean wetlands, the greater flamingo is easily recognizable.

It lives in groups and tramples the mud to feed. Unique among birds, its beak is curved and its morphology allows the filtration of mud and water.

It owes its name to its plumage, which is however largely pinkish white. It is the wing coverings that have an intense pink color; this color comes from the carotenoid pigments present in the algae and the crustaceans that they consume.



LITTLE TERN
(*Sternula albifrons*)

Between the swallow and the gull, this small limicole laro is recognizable by its size, its white forehead, its yellow beak with black tip and its fast and precise flight. This migratory species is not very widespread, it frequents in particular the wetlands behind the beaches and can be observed at the edge of the lagoons where it nests on natural or artificial islands. The only population of the lagoon close to the urbanization is found on the islets of Coudalère in Barcarès.



SOUTHERN DAMSELFLY
(*Coenagrion mercuriale*)

This small southern damselfly (not to be confused with a dragonfly) is well present in the channels running through the reedbeds west of the pond. This species is typically Mediterranean and likes the running waters. You will see them perhaps in tandem or copulatory heart in period of reproduction.



EUROPEAN POND TERRAPIN
(*Emys orbicularis*)

The European pond terrapin is present around the pond of Salses-Leucate in the southern limit of its range.

In spite of its strong regression, an important population is present in the ponds of Port-Leucate. More than 200 individuals are marked and followed, allowing to find each year new cistudons, proof of its reproduction in this reduced space which is convenient for it. A cold-blooded animal, this small aquatic turtle must observe long periods in the sun to accumulate the energy necessary for its activities. This species is threatened by the fragmentation of wetlands, the inadequate maintenance of ditches and canals, and competition with exotic turtles, notably the Florida turtle.

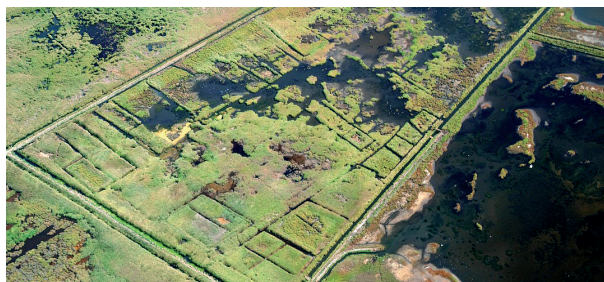
Management and conservation



RIVAGE, the Intercommunal Association for the Development and Management of the Salses-Leucate Pond, brings together the nine municipalities of the Salses-Leucate pond watershed. This syndicate is located at the Maison de l'étang that you can visit at the level of the grau des ostréiculteurs in Port-Leucate.

RIVAGE is the sole operator for the water development and management plan (SAGE), the pond contract, the Natura 2000 network and the management strategy for wetlands. Through its team, RIVAGE is responsible for leading all the operational phases (studies, consultation, management, monitoring, etc.). RIVAGE is supported by a network of technical and financial partners.

These tools make it possible to carry out actions in consultation with users and institutional partners, in order to improve the quality and management of the environment and the development of human activities, and finally to better know and make discover this exceptional heritage.



Biodiversity

The wide variety of habitats, differing salinity, depth and vegetation provide favorable conditions for a myriad of plant and animal species, including birds such as the locally rare snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and the curlew (*Numenius arquata*), turtles such as the European Cistude (*Emys orbicularis*), bats such as the vulnerable Capaccini's Bat (*Myotis capaccinii*), and a large number of fish, including the critically endangered European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*).



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.