



RAMSAR SITE  
NUMBER  
**642**

## Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin //



FRANCE

Area :  
**29 500 ha**

Date of designation :  
**December 8<sup>th</sup> 1993**

Coordinates :  
**16° 19'N 61° 35'W**

### Summary

The Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin of Guadeloupe covers an area of about 15,000 ha. It is delimited in its marine part by a coral barrier of more than 25 km and in its terrestrial part by the largest mangrove belt of the Lesser Antilles (more than 6,000 ha) and a freshwater swamp forest whose populations are among the most extensive of the Antilles.

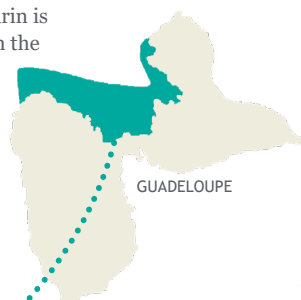
With an average depth of 2 to 5 m, the lagoon receives water from the Moustique River and the Grande Rivière à Goyave, the largest freshwater river in the Lesser Antilles. The site presents three main types of original environments: mangroves, sea grass beds and coral reefs.

### International importance

The Grand Cul de Sac Marin of Guadeloupe contains the largest coral reef and the largest area of mangroves still intact in the Lesser Antilles. It is also home to more than 80 species of birds, including a subspecies endemic to the Caribbean, the Rattlesnake (*Rallus crepitans caribaeus*) and many migrants. One can also find there nearly a third of the 600 species of fishes listed in the Caribbean.

### General location

The Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin is a vast bay located between the islands of Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre, from the tip of Grande Vigie to Pointe Allègre. The islets Kahouanne and Tête à l'Anglais were included in the Ramsar site in 2012.



Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin



### Adverse factors

The most important threats to the site are the filling in and destruction of the mangrove, the illegal dumping of all kinds of waste, the overexploitation of marine species and the use of unsuitable fishing methods, the development of polluting and/or disturbing tourist activities (motorboating in particular), and global warming which threatens the coral reefs which have already suffered from a significant bleaching in 2005.

### Services provided by wetlands

Beyond its ecological interest, the Grand-Cul-de-Sac-Marin is a major historical and cultural site of the Guadeloupe archipelago. Today abandoned by the great economic activities of the port and tourism, this bay has been the seat of an intense economic and cultural activity since the pre-Columbian era and the Pointe Allègre was the seat of the first French settlement on the island. The human activities on the site are devoted to fishing (fish, shellfish and crustaceans), to the traditional market gardening (Madeira, etc.) and to the tourism whose affluence is continuous all year long.

## Four species representative of the site



**GREAT EGRET**  
(*Ardea alba*)

The great egret is a large ardeid (heron). In nuptial period, its attributes of seduction appear in the form of long feathers, present on the back, the bottom of its neck and the chest. It occupies a wide variety of wetlands where it feeds on small prey, ranging from fish and crustaceans to reptiles, mammals or birds. At night the great egrets gather in "dormitories" in mangrove areas or on isolated trees.



**BLUE LAND CRAB**  
(*Cardisoma guanhumii*)

The blue land crab, equipped with a double respiratory system, evolves at the interface between land and sea. It can be found near mangrove swamps, dry wood ponds or wet meadows. It digs a deep burrow that serves as a habitat and refuge. In Guadeloupe, the Land crab is a particularly appreciated delicacy, especially during the Easter period. Its fishing is now subject to a prefectural decree limiting and regulating the techniques and periods of capture.



**RED MANGROVE**  
(*Rhizophora mangle*)

The red mangrove, a pioneer species of mangrove located on the sea front, is characteristic of the Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin bay. In addition to playing an essential nursery role, its stilted and intertwined roots allow it to limit soil erosion and increase the resilience of the territory to tropical climatic events. Its ability to adapt to such a complex environment remains remarkable.



**CLAPPER RAIL**  
(*Rallus crepitans caribaeus*)

The clapper rail or guinea fowl in Creole, is a subspecies endemic to the Caribbean, which is found throughout the Caribbean. It is mainly fond of mangrove swamps, flooded areas and salt marshes where it feeds mainly on fiddler crabs, worms, insects and small fish caught on the lookout. Its shy behavior as well as the difficult access to the mangrove, makes it difficult to observe. However, we can easily recognize its atypical territorial call.



## Biodiversity

The marine Phanerogam meadows are composed of 5 species of flowering plants, the most abundant of which is *Thalassia testudinum*. This plant constitutes the basis of the food of numerous herbivorous fish, green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) as well as black sea urchins (*Diadema antillarum*) and white sea urchins (*Tripneustes esculentus*).

The coral fauna of the Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin is rich; the majority of the species present in the French West Indies have been recorded there.

In the coastal areas, there are 71 species of coastal wetland birds of which 54 are protected and 18 species of seabirds of which 8 are protected. Among these birds, three are endemic: the caffeine warbler (*Dendroica plumbea*), the grey rail (*Rallus crepitans caribaeus*) and the Guadeloupe woodpecker (*Melanerpes herminieri*).

The flooded forests are frequented by 8 species of chiropterans including the rare Guadeloupean chiropteran (*Chiroderma improvisum*) (one of the 10 rarest species of chiropterans in the world), a species endemic to Guadeloupe and Montserrat which is only known in swamp forests.

## Management and conservation



The Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin bay is located inside the Biosphere Reserve of the Guadeloupe Archipelago (UNESCO MAB Program). The site is also included in the boundaries of the Guadeloupe National Park. The land ownership of the natural spaces is almost exclusively public, mainly assigned to the Conservatoire du Littoral. The ecological management of these spaces is entrusted to the Guadeloupe National Park.

The measures provided for in the management plan of the former Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin Nature Reserve concern the entire bay and have been included in the National Park charter.

The marine environment and wetlands (flora and avifauna of mangroves and islets) are monitored within the framework of IFRECOR (French Initiative for CORal Reefs) with the support of the teams of the Guadeloupe National Park.



### 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.