

Belval-en-Argonne //



Associated Ramsar site :
Étangs de la Champagne humide

Accreditation date :
May 26th 2022

Coordinates :
48° 57' N, 5° 00' E

FRANCE

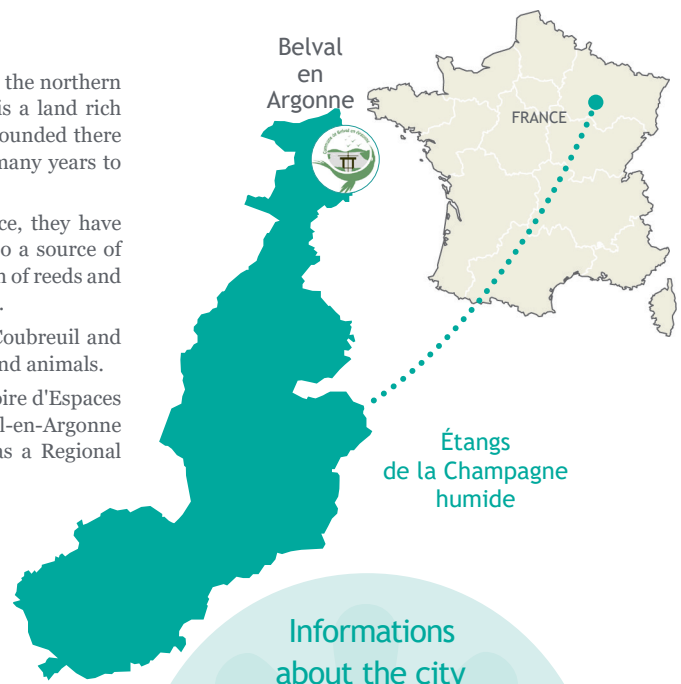
City's presentation

Belval-en-Argonne is a municipality located in the department of the Marne at the northern limit of the Ramsar site of the Ponds of Champagne humide. The Argonne is a land rich in ponds, historically created for fish farming by the many abbeys that were founded there during the 12th century. The village of 50 inhabitants has been working for many years to preserve its wetlands and the Ramsar site.

Belval ponds constitute the main wetland of the village. Created in one piece, they have supplied the surrounding area with fish for more than 500 years and are also a source of other activities for the inhabitants when the water is dry (cultivation, production of reeds and wood). They were divided into four in the 19th century to improve productivity.

The other wetlands of the village are the meadows regularly flooded by the Coubreuil and the ru des chiens, and the fifty or so ponds that are home to numerous plants and animals.

By joining forces with several nature protection associations - LPO, Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels de Champagne-Ardenne and Natuurpunt - the municipality of Belval-en-Argonne acquired the ponds of Belval-en-Argonne and obtained their classification as a Regional Nature Reserve (RNR) in 2012.



Informations about the city

Mayor : Philippe GILLE
Région : Grand-Est
Département : Marne (51)
Population : 47 inhabitants (2022)
City area : 1 217 ha
Wetland area : 567,5 ha
Ramsar site area : 1 217ha

Types of wetlands

- Permanent and temporary rivers / streams / creeks,
- Permanent freshwater marshes/pools,
- Shrub dominated wetlands,
- Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands,
- Freshwater springs ,
- Ponds, including aquaculture,
- Seasonally flooded agricultural land,
- Canals and drainage channels, ditches.



City's actions for wetlands



INTEGRATING WETLANDS IN THE CITY'S SPATIAL/LAND-USE PLANNING

The municipality has no development plan. Involved on a daily basis in the preservation of Belval ponds, the elected officials are aware of the issues related to the wetlands of their territory and take them into account in all their decisions:

- Abandonment of pesticides in the routine maintenance of the municipality;
- Bringing the individual sewage system up to environmental standards to adapt it to the geology of the clay soil.

From 2011 to 2014, the municipality, animator of two Natura 2000 sites present on its territory, was in fact at the heart of the discussions for the consideration of heritage issues in their management.



AVOIDING WETLANDS DEGRADATION AND DESTRUCTION

Faced with the degradation of the ponds of Belval-en-Argonne, the municipality has participated in the purchase of the site, along with 3 associations of nature protection (Natuurpunt, the LPO and the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Champagne-Ardenne).

The four owner structures then undertook to have the site classified as a Regional Nature Reserve (RNR) to preserve the heritage interest of the ponds.

More recently, the municipality participated in an inventory of ponds and amphibians conducted by the State. This inventory will allow us to make landowners aware of the presence of ponds and amphibians on their parcels.



ENCOURAGING WETLANDS RESTORATION OR CREATION

Belval ponds owners meet twice a year to discuss the management of the site, with a city councillor appointed to follow the work done on the regional nature reserve.

Important restoration work on the dikes and gates has been carried out to better manage the water levels of the ponds.

The municipality is also involved in the restoration of a watercourse (Coubreuil).

Within the framework of the Natura 2000 animation, a farmer of the municipality has contracted agri-environmental measures to reconvert crops into grassland.



RECOGNIZING VALUE AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY WETLANDS

The municipality promotes the rational use of wetlands by the various users.

They are used for fodder, grazing and hunting, and play an important role in flood control by limiting the risk of downstream flooding.

Thanks to the actions undertaken, the inhabitants and tourists can benefit throughout the year from outings to discover the ecological interest of the wetlands of the municipality.

To maintain a living memory of practices of yesteryear of the "Champagne humide", a traditional fishing, open to the public, is organized every year.



ENGAGING THE POPULATION IN WETLAND MANAGEMENT

The municipality is a member of the owners' commission and of the RNR's management advisory committee, which is made up of the key players in the wetlands sector at both local and regional levels - local authorities, the State, owners, users, scientists and associations.

The committee meets annually under the chairmanship of the Grand Est Region and frequently formulates opinions on communal operations in favor of wetlands.

A local committee has been created to monitor the City of Wetlands label. It is composed of all or part of the members of the advisory committee. Thus, local people are integrated into the discussions and decision-making of this large wetland.



RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT WETLANDS

At the time of the acquisition by the municipality, the issues and objectives of the Belval ponds reserve were presented to the inhabitants for a better integration of the project.

Numerous awareness-raising actions are set up by the municipality, with the support of owners, managers and financiers, in particular on the nature reserve and mainly at the time of the Pond Festival which mobilizes the whole village and attracts several hundred people.

The municipality also participates in the World Wetlands Day and in the Fréquence Grenouille operation in order to explain to the public the interest and the stakes of preservation of these large wetlands.



The Wetlands City accreditation of the Ramsar Convention

It aims to promote cities close to or dependent on wetlands of international importance, and which integrate the consideration of these areas in the development of their territory, thereby implementing a positive relationship with these invaluable ecosystems, particularly through preservation measures and greater public awareness.