

# Étang de Palo //



RAMSAR SITE  
NUMBER  
**1829**



FRANCE

Area :  
**212 ha**

Date of designation :  
**September 15<sup>th</sup> 2008**

Coordinates :  
**41° 56'N 09° 24'E**

## Summary

Located in a relatively preserved environment and little anthropized, the pond of Palu extends on 110 ha along the Eastern coast of Corsica for an average depth of 1 m. It is the fourth largest pond in Corsica. It is part of a series of almost continuous wetlands that stretches from Fiumorbu to Travo on 10 km of coastline. The pond is supplied with fresh water by some small streams for a catchment area of 31 km<sup>2</sup>. It is separated from the sea by a sandy barrier beach 2.5 km long and 150 m wide. A semi-natural grau is open from time to time to allow communication with the sea.

## International importance

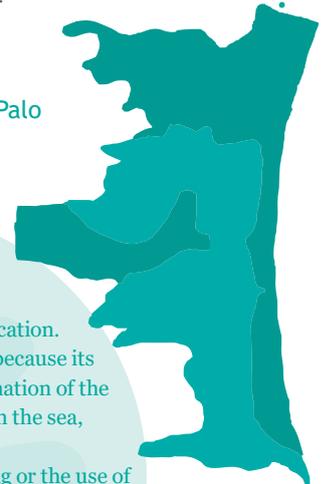
The pond of Palu constitutes a good witness of undisturbed Mediterranean lagoon ecosystem. Of great environmental richness, it shelters many remarkable, rare, threatened and/or endemic species of fauna and flora such as the Etna broom, the European cistude, the eel or the Corsican aphanus, a rare species, endemic to the North Mediterranean. It is also a privileged place for the rest, the wintering and the reproduction of numerous water birds.

## General location

The pond of Palu is located on the eastern coast of Corsica, at about one hundred kilometers in the south of Bastia, between Ghisonaccia and Solenzara, on the communes of Serra-di-Fiumorbu and Ventiseri.



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## Adverse factors

Palu Pond is sensitive to eutrophication. The grau is the keystone of the pond because its opening allows the renewal and oxygenation of the waters and favors the exchanges with the sea, essential to the fish.

The site is also very sensitive: to trampling or the use of all-terrain vehicles, which impact the dunes and their vegetation; and to fires, which destroy stands of cork oak and scrub. Agriculture in the catchment area is a source of nitrogenous inputs and the air base bordering the site is a source of potential diffuse hydrocarbon pollution.

## Services provided by wetlands

The site of Palu fulfills many functions useful for natural balances and human activities.

It plays a role of natural reservoir and contributes to the prevention of floods in the lowlands.

A professional fisherman present on the site uses equipment and traditional techniques used on the ponds of Corsica and Italy. The production is mainly based on eel, muge and mullet; the traditional boutargue is also produced.

The wet meadows to the north of the pond are exploited by a cattle farmer, which allows an opening of the environment favorable to the biodiversity.

Swimming and fishing take place mainly on the lido and the site is also frequented by hunters.

The vocation of the pond is today also that of an extraordinary tool of education to the environment with the installation of actions intended for the school children and the installation of a path on the peninsula of Palu.



## Four species representative of the site



**MOUNT ETNA BROOM**  
(*Genista aetnensis*)

This shrub which can reach the dimensions of a small tree, is a paleoendemic species of Sardinia and Sicily. It is rare in Corsica and protected at the regional level. Today, there are only two stations of Etna broom out of the four originally inventoried: one on the coastal strip of Solaro, about 4 km south of the site, which today has only one representative, and the other on the lido of the pond of Palu, which has more than 130 individuals.



**HERMANN'S TORTOISE**  
(*Testudo hermanni*)

This species is in regression on the whole of its area of distribution. The current world populations are limited to two nuclei: one in Corsica, quite extensive, the other in Provence, more reduced. It benefits from numerous protection statuses and is considered as vulnerable. An important population of Hermann's Tortoise is present on the periphery of the pond of Palu, a relatively vast and protected natural site. Only the fires can constitute a threat for it.



**MEDITERRANEAN KILLIFISH**  
(*Aphanius fasciatus*)

A small fish, it can survive the extreme conditions of the lagoon environment. It is an endemic North Mediterranean species, not protected at the national level, but listed in Annex II of the European "Habitats" Directive. This species is considered rare and is found in Corsica at the north-western limit of its distribution area. It is not found in continental France. In Corsica, it is essentially present in the big lagoons and the small littoral ponds of the Eastern coast: Biguglia, Palu, Urbinu, delta of Osu...



**EURASIAN COOT**  
(*Fulica atra*)

The Eurasian coot, a black rail with a rounded shape and a mainly vegetarian diet, is found in all types of wetlands. They like to rest or graze on dry land, but never stray far from the water. Coots are excellent divers and have a gregarious behavior on the water in winter. The pond of Palu is an important wintering site for this species, the second site in terms of numbers after the pond of Biguglia.



## Management and conservation

The pond of Palu, property of the Conservatoire du Littoral, is managed by the Collectivité de Corse. Classified as a natural area of ecological, faunistic and floristic interest, it is registered as a Natura 2000 site as a Special Area of Conservation since 1998, and received the Ramsar label in September 2008.

A management plan has been established with various partners concerned to apply the guidelines of the Document of Objectives of the Natura 2000 site. These guidelines concern, among other things, the conservation of natural heritage, landscape management, the supervision of economic activities, the reception of the public and awareness raising. The guards of the Collectivité de Corse ensure these missions.



## Biodiversity

On the site of Palu are juxtaposed, on a relatively restricted space, very varied biotopes which form a mosaic of environments going from the most arid to the most wet and from the softest to the most salty.

There is one of the largest groups of sansouïres in Corsica, salt meadows, rushes, tamaricaies, reedbeds characteristic of the site and which represent habitats of great interest in particular for the avifauna.

The site counts more than 110 species of birds, wintering or passing through: herons, flamingos, coots... as well as several more or less occasional remarkable nesting species: marsh harrier, red pipit, white stilt... Numerous waders also frequent the site during migration or wintering.

The dense aquatic phanerogam beds that occupy the bottom of the pond play an essential role for many associated species. The site is also remarkable for its richness in chiropterans, fish, reptiles and amphibians.



### 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.