



RAMSAR SITE
NUMBER
1835

Le marais Audomarois //



FRANCE

Area :
3 726 ha

Date of designation :
September 15th 2008

Coordinates :
50° 46' N 02° 16' E

Summary

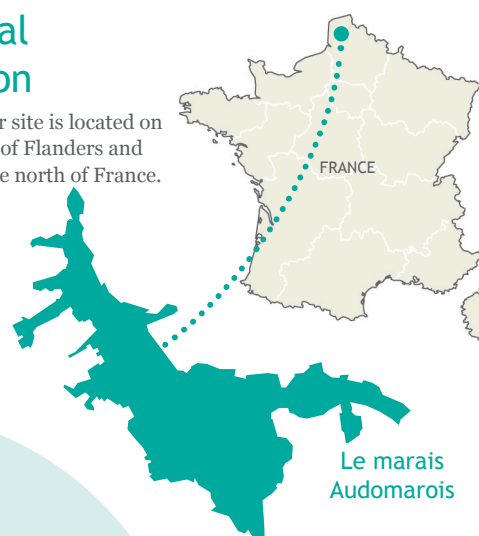
The marais Audomarois is an ancient swamp, progressively developed by man since the 8th century. From this work, picturesque landscapes were born. Finished to be arranged in the 19th century, the communal marsh is exploited for market gardening and is composed of a succession of strips of ground, called lègres and ditches, called watergangs. The Clairmarais basin, further east, is mainly made up of wet meadows. Water bodies in the Romelaëre and Canarderie sectors are the result of peat extraction. The oldest rivers are near the ones near the city of Saint-Omer, and are characterized by their meanders.

International importance

The site is listed as a wetland of international importance because of the large number of plant and animal species it supports, many of which are classified as "vulnerable" or "rare". It is an important site during the post-nuptial migrations for paludicolous passerines.

General location

This Ramsar site is located on the borders of Flanders and Artois, in the north of France.



Le marais Audomarois

Services provided by wetlands

The marsh provides food and habitat for many animal species.

Hunting, fishing, agriculture and breeding are practiced throughout the marsh. The marsh hosts tourist and leisure activities that contribute to the local economy.

The wetland regulates and purifies the water; it diminishes the effect of floods for the delta located downstream. The site plays an essential role in flood control between the watershed and the Aa delta to which it is attached.

A study also made it possible to highlight the services identified by the actors of the territory (inhabitants, farmers, tourist service providers, managers of natural areas, etc.), thus defining their vision of the wetland and the benefits it provides them.

Cultural services are cited first (landscape setting), followed by provisioning services (cauliflower production, cattle raising, game from hunting and fish from fishing, etc.) and regulating services (pollination, natural filter role).

Adverse factors

Historically, the development of agriculture has resulted in the creation of rivers and ditches, the construction of dykes, mills and water gates. The exploitation of peat left ponds that allowed the development of fishing and hunting activities. The gradual abandonment of agricultural activity from the 1970s onwards has left land orphan plots on which leisure tourism has developed. The anarchic development of the latter, possible effects of climate change and the increase in surface and groundwater withdrawals are factors that could have a lasting effect on the site ecological characteristics.



Four species representative of the site



GREEN-EYED HAWKER
(*Aeshna isoceles*)

The site has two breeding stations, one in ditches colonized by water aloe (*Stratiotes aloides*) and the second one in edge of ditches with hydrophytes. These stations are known to be the most important in the region.



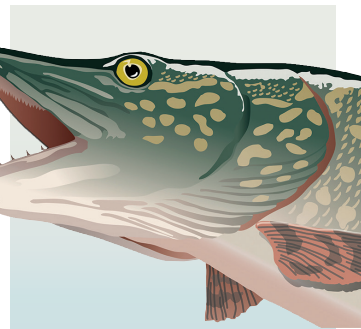
LITTLE BITTERN
(*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

The population of the Little Bittern is subject to wide variation. Uncommon to rare on the marsh in the 1990s, it became one of the emblems in the 2000s. However, its population has been in steep decline again in recent years.



WATER SOLDIERS
(*Stratiotes aloides*)

The "Water soldiers", as it is called here, has the largest known French population. Its populations do not seem to be flourishing as much as in the past.



NORTHERN PIKE
(*Esox lucius*)

The 700 km of canals in the marsh seems to be very favorable to the northern pike. It is certainly this aspect which determined that the marsh was the high regional place for the reproduction of this big carnivore.

Biodiversity

The site is home to nearly 239 species of birds, 113 of which are known to nest in 2015, such as the eurasian bittern, the little bittern, the savi's warbler and the aquatic warbler. In total, nearly 2,000 species of sponge, flora and fauna have been counted.



Management and conservation

The Ramsar site represents the buffer zone of the Audomarais Marsh Biosphere Reserve and includes several protected areas: the national nature reserve of the Romelaère Ponds, the regional nature reserve of the Schoubrouck Meadows, the sensitive natural areas of the Conservatoire du littoral and of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais departments, and two Natura 2000 sites (SACs: Special Area of Conservation - and SPAs: Special Protection Area).

The Ramsar site has a management plan called : the marsh contract. This document serves as a guiding document for the biosphere reserve and is one of the components of the charter of the Parc naturel régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale, into whose territory it is incorporated. The monitoring of the fauna and flora as well as scientific research are carried out and supported by a scientific council dedicated to the territory. Communication and educational operations are carried out by structures in charge of the territory, including the presence of site houses, information and reception centers.



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.