



RAMSAR SITE
NUMBER
2247

Marais Vernier et vallée de la Risle maritime //



Area :
9 564 ha

Date of designation:
December 18th 2015

Coordinates :
49° 26'N 00° 29'E

Summary

The Marais Vernier, a former meander of the Seine, covers 4500 ha and hosts the largest peat deposit in France as well as the only natural pond in the Seine-Normandy basin: the Grand'Mare. The proximity of the estuary and the size of this site make it one of the largest wetlands in the Seine valley. The Risle Maritime is a coastal river; as such, it is of great interest for migrating fish or the reproduction of certain species.

International importance

As an ancient meander very well preserved offering a mosaic of alkaline and acidic peat bogs, the Vernier Marsh is a truly unique case. The presence of the Grand'Mare and its importance for birds, especially during migration, contribute to the heritage character of the site. The site is home to numerous habitats of community interest recognized through Natura 2000. It is of considerable importance for the life cycle of many species, some of which are threatened on a global scale. The diversity of species present on the territory is among the most important in the region.

General location

Located in Normandy, near the mouth of the Seine, the site follows the south bank of the river from Aizier to the marshes of Saint-Samson-la-Roque. It encompasses the Vernier marsh and the Risle as far as Pont-Audemer, the Little Venice of Normandy, and its ponds.



Adverse factors

The proper management of water levels is a key factor in maintaining the ecological characteristics of the site. Nevertheless, the malfunctioning of the works on the Saint-Aubin canal (intended to evacuate the water from the marsh and prevent the intrusion of water from the Seine, which is heavily laden with suspended matter), the increasingly frequent droughts and the conflicts of use between agriculture and hunting accentuate the water deficit in summer, leading to the mineralization of the peat.

For migratory fish, the problems of ecological continuity encountered on the Risle and the Saint-Aubin canal have an impact on their potential for reproduction and the overexploitation of certain parts of the watercourses. Numerous efforts are currently being made to curb these phenomena.

Services provided by wetlands

The wetland supports many human activities, mainly extensive agriculture, but also hunting, fishing and other tourist and cultural activities.

The marsh has been studied for a long time by scientists and has been the subject of many experiments for environmental knowledge and management. It constitutes an inexhaustible educational support.

The size and quality of the peaty environments in the marsh and on the banks of the Risle River help purify the water coming from the watershed as well as provide important water storage during the winter. The preservation of these environments also contributes to the storage of carbon and thus to the regulation of greenhouse gases.

The quality and diversity of the environments present offer habitats of choice for reproduction, feeding and quietude of many animal and plant species.



Four species representative of the site



HIGHLAND CATTLE

These small highland cattle have become very emblematic and have been introduced into certain protected areas of the Marais Vernier for environmental management purposes on the wettest parts. Very well adapted to the particularities of these environments, the use of highlands in extensive grazing allows the maintenance of open environments, favorable to the expression of an important and patrimonial biodiversity.



WHITE STORK
(*Ciconia ciconia*)

This species has grown significantly since its arrival in 1992. Initially nesting on platforms, the majority of the nests are now in trees. The population of the site totals today about forty couples of which some remain even to spend the winter. Highly dependent on wetlands for their food and especially that of their young, storks have become emblematic and help to raise public awareness of the issues of preservation of these environments.



MARSH LAX-FLOWERED ORCHID
(*Anacamptis palustris*)

The population present in the Vernier marsh constitutes the most important station of the northwestern quarter of France. Concentrated on less than one hectare, nearly 450 flowering stems are counted there on average. The importance of the parcel motivated the taking of a decree of protection of biotope since 1993.



SOUTHERN DAMSELFLY
(*Coenagrion mercuriale*)

This species of southern damselfly is linked to springs and small streams and is endemic to Western Europe. It is regularly present in the valley of the Risle maritime, the northern limit of the French distribution of the species, from Saint-Samson-la-Rocque to Toutainville, with important populations in the communes of Foulbec and Saint-Sulpice-de-Grimbouville.



Biodiversity

The biodiversity on the site is among the most important in the Seine Valley. There are more than 170 threatened and/or protected animal and plant species, including about a hundred birds. Some of these species are present in large numbers. This is the case of the teal, the shoveler and the pintail for which the site hosts more than 1% of the world population.

In the current state of knowledge, several populations correspond to the last strongholds of threatened species in the Seine estuary and its tributaries: the mirror butterfly, the intermediate-leaved sundew and the narrow vertigo in particular.



Management and conservation

Entirely included in the territory of the Boucles de la Seine Normande Regional Nature Park, the site also benefits from numerous zoning and protection programs involving various actors (Conservatoire du littoral, Department, State, Hunters Federation, local associations, etc.) in the knowledge and preservation of wetlands.

The Ramsar perimeter is notably based on that of the Natura 2000 site, a site designated under the Habitats and Birds Directives and whose animation is ensured by the park. A dozen agents of the park are dedicated to the action on wetlands and aquatic environments. Together with the numerous actors of the site, they lead ambitious projects such as the restoration of the Grand'Mare or of ecological continuities.



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.