

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

## 1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

1998

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DD	MM	YY

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

## 2. Country:

Australia

## 3. Name of wetland:

Eighty-mile Beach, Western Australia

## 4. Geographical coordinates:

Latitude: (approx.) 19° 02'S to 20° 00'S; Longitude: (approx.) 119° 48'E to 121° 32'E

## 5. Altitude:

## 6. Area:

Approximately 125 000 ha.

## 7. Overview:

A long section of coastline with large tidal mudflats and a series of springs occurring in marshland to the east. More than 300 000 migratory waders have been counted on the mudflats in spring. The springs in the hinterland are on an old palaeoriver system and support unusual vegetation.

## 8. Wetland Type:

marine-coastal: A B C D E F **G** H I J K

inland: L M N O P Q **R** **Sp** Ss Tp Ts

U Va Vt W Xf Xp Y Zg Zk

man-made: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

## 9. Ramsar Criteria:

**1a** 1b 1c 1d | 2a 2b **2c** 2d | **3a** 3b **3c** | 4a 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

10. Map of site included? Please tick **yes**  -or- **no**.

**11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:**

Department of Conservation and Land Management  
Locked Bag 104  
Bentley Delivery Centre WA 6983

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**12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.****13. General location:**

Eighty-mile Beach from Cape Missiessy to Cape Keraudren and Mandora Salt Marsh, Western Australia

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**14. Physical features:**

Almost all the Eighty-mile Beach consists of a white siliceous sand beach about 100 metres wide with a 0.5 metres drop to tidal mudflats on the western side. Sand dunes occur behind the beach. However, there are a few small bays where mud collects and mangroves have become established. In Mandora Salt Marsh there are a number of permanent or almost permanent fresh-water swamps supplied by springs. The most spectacular of these is Mandora Soak, one of the Eil Eil Springs, which is a classical raised peat bog. Salt Creek, an old watercourse lined with mangroves that is about 20 m wide and 5 km long, is possibly connected to the sea by an aquifer.

The dominant species on the sand-dunes are *Crotalaria cunninghamii* and *Spinifex longifolius*. The most common species of mangrove is *Avicennia marina*. Mandora Soak supports *Melaleuca argentea*, *Sesbania formosa*, sedges, bullrushes and ferns. The marshy areas contain samphire vegetation and *Sporobolus virainicus* grassland.

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**15. Hydrological values:**

The major hydrological values of the nominated area occur in Mandora Salt Marsh, where the Eil Eil Springs, Grant Spring and Salt Creek are discharge sites for groundwater. They are located in a palaeoriver channel.

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**16. Ecological features:**

In terms of numbers, Eighty-mile Beach is the most important area for waders in north-western Australia; 336 000 birds were recorded there in November 1982. It is especially important as a landfall for southwards-migrating birds. Based on counts in August and November 1981-83, the most abundant species are:

Large sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	41 170
Oriental Plover	<i>C. veredus</i>	18 410
Red-capped Plover	<i>C. ruficapillus</i>	15 182
Grey-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	8 466
Greenshank	<i>T. nebularia</i>	5 296
Terek Sandpiper	<i>T. terek</i>	3 000
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	34 267
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	80 700
Great Knot	<i>C. tenuirostris</i>	161 068
Red-necked Stint	<i>C. ruficollis</i>	60 035
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>C. ferruginea</i>	60 510

The principal conservation value of the area is the presence of so many waders. However, Mandora Salt Marsh is part of a palaeo-drainage system extending from the eastern Kimberley, through Lake Gregory, Eighty-mile Beach. Thus the springs in the Salt marsh date from the Holocene. The peat deposit in Mandora Soak is 7 000 years old. The springs also support interesting and unusual plant assemblages. Salt Creek contains the most inland mangroves (40 km from the coast) in Western Australia.

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**17. Noteworthy flora:**

See ECOLOGICAL FEATURES.

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**18. Noteworthy fauna:**

See ECOLOGICAL FEATURES.

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**19. Social and cultural values:**

The principal social values are cattle grazing in Mandora Salt Marsh and tourism on Eighty-mile Beach. Both activities are compatible with maintaining the ecological character of the wetland, provided some restrictions are observed.

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**20. Land tenure/ownership:**

The western part of the nominated area extends only 40 metres above high-tide mark and consists of Crown land. The area to the east is contained in the Anna Plains Pastoral Lease.

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**21. Current land use:**

There is little human activity on Eighty-mile Beach although a Caravan Park has been established on Wallal Downs, just behind the dunes, and another is proposed at Cape Keraudren. Cattle grazing occurs on the Mandora Salt Marsh.

Petroleum exploration permits are held over the area.

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**22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:**

Cattle grazing has probably had little or no detrimental effect on the samphire areas of Mandora Salt Marsh with respect to waterbird usage but has caused substantial deterioration in the vegetation and physical environment of the springs and Salt Creek. An investigation of ways of reducing the impact of grazing in these areas, especially around Mandora Soak, is desirable.

Exploration for petroleum may occur in future and, provided it is subject to environmental safeguards to maintain the ecological character of the wetland and habitat for the waterbirds using it, will be compatible with status as a Wetland of International Importance.

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**23. Conservation measures taken:**

None.

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**24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

None.

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**25. Current scientific research and facilities:**

Banding of waders is conducted every 18 months or 2 years by the Australian Wader Study Group (AWSG).

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**26. Current conservation education:**

None.

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**27. Current recreation and tourism:**

There is a Caravan Park on Eighty-mile Beach at Wallal Downs and some recreational fishing occurs.

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**28. Jurisdiction:**

Government of Western Australia

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**29. Management authority:**

Department of Land Administration, Central Government Building,  
Cathedral Avenue, Perth WA 6000.

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**30. Bibliographical references:**

Lane, B. (1983). AWSG research-progress report. Stilt 4, 21-22.

Lane, B. and Jessop, A. (1985). Report on the 1985 north-west Australia wader studies expedition. Stilt 6, 2-16.

Minton, C. (1982). AWSG wader expedition in north-west Australia, August/September 1982. Stilt 3, 2-4.

Minton, C. and Martindale, J. (1982). Report on wader expedition to north-west Australia in August/September 1981. Stilt 2, 14-26.

Wyrwoll, K.H., McKenzie, N.L., Pedersen, B.J. and Tapley, I.J. (1986). The Great Sandy Desert of north-western Australia: the last 7 000 years. Search 17, 208-210.

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