

INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR WETLANDS

RAMSARSP.16

1.- Country:

Spain.

2.- Date:

1992

3.- Ref.:

7ES016

4.- Name and address of compiler:

Servicio de Protección de Espacios Naturales. Dirección General de Conservación del Medio Natural. Conselleria de Medio Ambiente. c/ Bailía 1.46003 Valencia.

5.- Name of wetland:

Salinas de Santa Pola Natural Place (Paraje Natural).

6.- Date of Ramsar designation:

May 1992

7.- Geographical coordinates:

38° 10' N ; 00° 36' E.

8.- General location:

Valencia Region. Alicante Province. Nearest important city: Santa Pola.

9.- Area:

2.469 Has.

10.- Wetland type:

E / H / Q / 5.

11.- Altitude:

Max. 6 m. above sea level. Min. 1 m. a.s.l.

12.- Overview:

The site consists of coastal salt mines under exploitation, being surrounded by seasonal or permanent flooding areas, beach and dunes in the coast. It is of great interest to shorebirds and gulls, as well as to flamingoes. The site is essential to complete the biological cycle of endangered species.

13.- Physical features:

The site is a part of the Elche plain, a great tectonic depression that formerly was a great coastal pool, later filled by fluvial silts. The resulting area was transformed into salt mines working by sea water pumping, with internal saline wetlands. For these reasons, soils have a sedimentary origin: gleysoles and solochank in lower heights and cambisoles and

fluvisoles in higher areas. Water quality is good, although there is no defense against contaminated run-off with agricultural residues and the channels crossing the area have highly contaminated waters, that are poured to the sea without purifying treatment.

Climate is arid mediterranean with average temperature ranging between 20⁰ C and 24⁰ C. Average rainfall ranges between 276 and 290 mm per year, with frequent floodings.

14.- Ecological features:

The following types of habitats may be found here:

- DUNES AND BEACH LINE with vegetal communities belonging to the class *Ammophiletea* and pinewood lines. It owes its interest to insect fauna and also to shorebirds, sterns and gulls.

- SALT MINES with a variety of areas of different salinity and depth ("esteros"), acting as pre-concentrating, concentrating and crystallizing ponds. Its flora ranges according to salinity from phanerogams to extremely halophylic bacteria of great interest to birds, in particular to flamingoes and shorebirds. Fish fauna is also of great interest, especially the "fartet" (*Aphanius iberus*) as well as marine species, of great commercial interest.

- TEMPORAL PONDS with brackish waters, reedbeds and cane-like vegetation, of great interest to ducks, herons, terns, grebes, etc.

- SALINE AREAS with vegetation belonging to the classes *Arthrocnemetalia* and *Limoniotalia*. It owes its interest to insect fauna, birds and lizard community.

- CROP RING. The site has a crop ring in its SE zone as well as some scattered buildings.

15.- Land tenure/ownership of:

a) site. It is a private property. Salinas del Braç del Port S.A. is the main owner, with a 35 % of the land.

b) surrounding area. This is also a private property with a great number of small plots owners.

16.- Conservation measures taken:

- It was declared Natural Place ("Paraje Natural"), by the Regional Government Decree 190/88, as stated by the Law 5/89 on Natural Places.

- The site is in the RAMSAR list and also is a S.P.A. according to the Directive 79/409 CEE.

17.- Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

- The Management Plan has been initially passed and it is still in course.

18.- Current land use: principal human activities in:

a) site: Salt mines exploitation, hunting, fishing and to a lesser extent, agriculture.

b) surrounding area/catchment: Agricultural, urban and industrial uses.

19.- Disturbances/threats including changes in land use and major development projects:

a) at the site:

- Transformations of the saline environments into crops, buildings or creation of small ponds.
- Hunting and fishing not controlled enough.
- Excess of human pressure in coastal areas.
- Some fish hatcheries are in project.

b) in the surroundings/catchment:

- High urban pressure.

20.- Hydrological and physical values:

Three dune fronts in the littoral area are of great interest: one is ongoing and the remaining two are fossil. The older one corresponds to "eutirreniense" time and the second to "neotirreniense" time. Santa Pola cape acts as a sedimentary trap to fluvial silts. In this way the old Elche gulf, or Sinus Ilicitanus in the romans' times, was being filled progressively.

21.- Social and cultural values:

- Economic interest by the salt mines exploitation, fishing production and hunting.
- Cultural interest by fauna, flora, geology and lanscape.
- The Tamarit Tower (XVI century) is an important archaeological site and at present it is in ruins.

22.- Noteworthy fauna:

Additionally to the insect and lacertidae fauna, very interesting, in the dune sector may be underlined the piscicultural richness in the pre-concentrating ponds (in particular the endemic species *Aphanius iberus*, very abundant), but over all bird fauna is to be highlighted.

Nesting species are the avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) as the most important with 500 pairs, black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), little tern (*Sterna albifrons*), marbled teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), red crested pochard (*Netta rufina*), pochard (*Aythya ferina*), shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) coot (*Fulica atra*), whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*), little bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), black necked grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), water rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), bearded tit (*Panurus biarmicus*), moustached warbler (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*) and the rare slender-billed gull (*Larus genei*). Throughout the whole year, the salt mines hold great numbers of waterbirds, highlighting the wintering of anatidae and shorebirds, as well as of great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*). Flamingoes may be found all the year with peaks in november and december with more than 2.000 birds.

23.- Noteworthy flora:

The following endemic communities may be found in the area:

- *Halimiono - Sarcocornietum alpini* (Peninsular south and south-east).

- *Cistancho lutea* - *Arthrocnemum fruticosi* (Coastal gaditano-onubo-algarbiense , betics and murciano-almeriense).
 - *Frankenio* - *Arthrocnemum macrostachyi* (murciano-almeriense).
 - *Frankenio* - *Halocnemum strobilacei* (alicantino-murciana).
 - *Limonio caesii* - *Lygeetum sparti* (murciano-alicantine and setabense).
 - *Gasouletum cristallino* - *nodiflori* (peninsular south-east)
 - *Atriplici glaucae* - *Suaedetum pruinosae* (murciano-almeriense, guadiciano-becense and setabense).
- Within the species, *Cynomorium coccineum*, *Limonium santapolense* and *L. thinniense* may be underlined as micro-endemic in the area.

24.- Current scientific research and facilities:

- Waterbird populations are being monitored periodically.
- The shelduck Management Plan and the marbled teal Recovery Plan is being prepared.
- A research on the gen. *Limonium* in this area is being also performed.

25.- Current conservation education:

- At present, an educative and divulgating environmental program for protected areas is being performed. It consists on itineraries with monitors through the Place for adults and schools. Adult brochures and school visitor booklets, are also available.
- The forest-house is being adapted as the visitor centre.

26.- Current recreation and tourism:

The monitors takes groups of adults to make one-day itineraries, between Mondays and Saturdays.

27.- Management authority:

CONSELLERIA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE. GENERALITAT VALENCIANA.
c/ Bailía 1.46003 Valencia.

28.- Jurisdiction:

Regional Government, through Generalitat Valenciana and its Conselleria de Medio Ambiente.

29.- Bibliographical references:

BOX AMOROS, M. (1987). Humedales y áreas lacustres de la provincia de Alicante. Instituto Gil Albert. Diputación de Alicante.

CONSELLERIA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE (1991). Plan Rector de Uso y Gestión de las Salinas de Santa Pola.

30.- Reasons for inclusion:

1 d, 2 a, 2 c, 2 d, 3 b and 3 c.

31.- Map of the site:

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