

## INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR WETLANDS

**1.- Country:**

España.

**2.- Date:**

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**3.- Ref.:**

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**4.- Name and address of compiler:**

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Pça. 20 de maig s/n 23580 - DELTEBRE (Tarragona)

**5.- Name of wetland:**

Delta del Ebro Natural Park. Also "Deltebre".

**6.- Date of Ramsar designation:**

26-03-1993

**7.- Geographical coordinates:**

40° 41' N ; 0° 44' W.

**8.- General location:**

Cataluña region. Tarragona province. Municipalities of Ampolla, Deltebre, Sant Jaume d'Enveja, Amposta and Sant Carles de la Rápita. Nearest large town: Tortosa.

**9.- Area:**

7.736 Has.

**10.- Wetland type:**

**11.- Altitude:**

Between sea level and a few meters height.

**12.- Overview:**

This is a typical river delta, with a combination of habitats like shallow brackish and saline lagoons, salt marshes, and coastal sandy areas. This is the biggest and the most important wetland in Catalonia, it is also the second most important wetland in western Mediterranean, after Camargue, and the second wetland in the Iberian Peninsula, after Doñana. Plant communities are well developed and some endangered and endemic species may be found here. The site is extremely important for waterbirds. About 30.000 breeding pairs and about 180.000 wintering birds, are quite usual.

**13.- Physical features:**

The Delta was formed between XIVth and XVIIIth centuries in the mouth of Ebro river, the longest of Iberian Peninsula, protruding 30 km towards the open Mediterranean Sea. The soils are formed basically by muds, but sands are predominating in

coastal areas. In inland wetlands some peatlands may be found. Water salinity ranges from local freshwater springs (Els Ullals with 10 Has.) to saline lagoons (La Tancada, 312 Has.). Additionally there are other important lagoons: La Encanyissada (850 Has.), Calaixos de Buda (600 Has.), Canal Vell (235 Has.), L'Aufacada (250 Has.), La Platjola (90 Has.) and La Goleta (50 Has.).

The range of temperatures is quite small, since this is a land tongue surrounded by the sea, muffling thermic oscillations and giving rise to high air humidities. Prevailing winds come from northwest ("mistral") in winter and from the sea ("marinades") during the summer. Average rainfall is 536 mm per year and average annual temperature is 18<sup>o</sup> C. Sub-zero temperatures are very unusual.

#### **14.- Ecological features:**

The landscape started to change deeply at the end of XIX century when major agricultural practices, were initiated. At present crops, mainly ricefields, are predominating in the delta instead of the reedbeds, salt marshes and extensive riparian woods, existing before.

The main natural habitats existing in the delta are freshwater and brackish lagoons, reed and glasswort beds, bank woods, coastal areas, dunes and ricefields

#### **15.- Land tenure/ownership of:**

a) the site: A large part of the Natural Park is included in the public zone of the terrestrial part of the coast. Several main lagunes are public property, and a small part of the lagunes are partly private property. Overall, 99% of the site is public property.

b) surrounding areas: The park covers about 25% of the Delta, including practically all the natural zones. About 650 ha of the delta is private property. The rest of the area is covered with agricultural zones, mainly used for and fruit and vegetable growing. 93% of the fields are less than 5 ha per field.

#### **16.- Conservation measures taken:**

The Regional Government increased the protected area by a previous Decree (357/83) declaring the site Natural Park, by means of the Generalitat de Catalunya Presidence Decree 332/86. The Natural Park since then includes also two Natural Reserves (Reserva Natural Parcial de la Isla de Sapinya and Reserva Natural Parcial de Punta de la Banya).

The site is in the list of Ramsar sites and it is also a S.P.A. according to the Directive 79/409/CEE.

La Encanyissada and La Tancada lagoons are also National Hunting Reserves since 1966.

#### **17.- Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

The Plan for the Natural Areas is at the moment awaiting formal approval. It protects a total of 11,529 ha of the Delta. This Plan covers the total area of the park, and zones at the borders of the park.

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

a) site: mainly hunting, fishing, tourism, and locally agriculture, aquaculture and cattle raising (fighting bulls).  
**awaiting further translation**

b) surrounding/catchment: In the surrounding area, there is mainly agriculture (rice, vegetables, fruit), tourism, intensive cattle breeding (pigs, poultry), aquaculture, extensive cattle breeding.  
**awaiting further translation**

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

a) at the site: Water pollution by the use of chemicals in neighbouring crops, disturbances to nesting birds and hunting pressure are regarded as the major constraints to the conservation of the site.

b) in the surrounding/catchment: There is an increasing use of the Ebro hydric resources throughout its whole basin. Some concerns about a declining of sediment supplies that could endanger the land-water equilibrium of the delta, have been proposed.

On the other hand, some urban developments, sportive harbours and intensive fish farming are being projected.

**20.- Hydrological and physical values:**

**awaiting translation**

**21.- Social and cultural value:**

**awaiting translation**

**22.- Noteworthy fauna:**

Within invertebrate fauna, very abundant and varied, crustacean species like *Artemia salina* and the endangered freshwater mussel (*Margaritifera auricularia*), may be underlined.

The fish fauna is also very important, despite the decline of sturgeons (*Acipenser sturio*) and the lampreys (*Petromyzon marinus*). Species belonging to Mugilidae, Ciprinidae and Serranidae are very abundant, being under exploitation, as well as adults and larvae of eels (*Anguilla anguilla*).

The formerly common otter (*Lutra lutra*), now is very rare.

Birds are the most important animal group, especially water birds. High numbers of pairs (about 30.000) breed here currently. The following species may be highlighted: *Botaurus stellaris* with 10 pairs, *Ixobrychus minutus* with 150, *Ardeola ralloides* with 195, *Bubulcus ibis* with 1.50, *Egretta garzetta* with 563, *Ardea purpurea* with 2.300, *Netta rufina* with 21.500, *Haematopus ostralegus* with 23, *Himantopus himantopus* with about 1.000, *Recurvirostra avosetta* with 400, *Glareola pratincola* with 100, *Charadrius alexandrinus* with about 1.000, *Larus genei* with 280, *Larus audouinii* with 4.200 pairs, being the largest colony of this species, *Gelochelidon nilotica* with at least 100, *Sterna*

*sandvicensis* with 250, *Sterna hirundo* with 2.300, *Sterna albifrons* with 650 and *Chlidonias hybrida* with 600 pairs.

Wintering waterbirds reach also high numbers, being the January average about 7.100 *Anas penelope*, 1.700 *Anas strepera*, 12.800 *Anas crecca*, 42.600 *Anas platyrhynchos*, 8.100 *Anas clypeata*, 1.100 *Netta rufina*, about 1.300 *Phalacrocorax carbo* and 2.000 *Phoenicopterus ruber*.

**23.- Noteworthy flora:**

Plant communities being common in western mediterranean coastal areas, are also represented here, in general in very good conditions. In addition to that, some species may be highlighted since the delta is the most northern locality: *Lonicera biflora*, *Tamarix boveana* and *Zygophyllum album*, being that its only locality in continental Europe. On the other hand, for others this is their most southern locality (*Nymphaea alba*, *Alnus glutinosa*). Others having a very limited scope in mediterranean areas, are also here: *Limonium bellidifolium*, *L. girardianum*, *L. dessissimum*, *Phragmites australis ruscionensis*, etc.).

**24.- Current scientific research and facilities:**

*awaiting translation*

**25.- Current conservation education:**

*awaiting translation*

**26.- Current recreation and tourism:**

*awaiting translation*

**27.- Management authority:**

Parque Natural del Delta del Ebro (Departamento de Agricultura, Ganaderia y Pesca). Plaza 20 de Mayo, s/n 43580 DELTEBRE

**28.- Jurisdiction:**

Generalitat de Catalunya

**29.- Bibliographical references:**

**30.- Reasons for inclusion:**

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

**31.- Map of the site:**

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