

Translation of Spanish Original 1992INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR WETLANDSRAMSARSP.23

1.- Country:

Spain

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4.- Name and address of compiler:

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5.- Name of wetland.-

Embalse de Orellana

6.- Date of Ramsar designation:

26-03-93

7.- Geographical coordinates:

8.- General location:

Badajoz Province. It is located near the following villages: Orellana la Vieja, Orellana de la Sierra, Navalvillar de Pela, Casas de Don Pedro y Talarrubias. Limits of the site are according to the maximum height of the pond.

9.- Area:

5.500 Has.

10.- Wetland type:

5 (Perhaps 6, reservoir?).¹

11.- Altitude:

Maximum height of the pond is 318 m above sea level, although there are some islands where height is 353 m. a. s. l.

12.- Overview:

This is a man-made reservoir, and it was built to regulate Guadiana River, mainly for irrigating the Vegas Altas (High Fertile Plains). The site holds the biggest wintering population of Cranes of Iberian Peninsula, as well as great numbers of wintering Anatidae and one of the most important breeding colonies of Gull-billed Tern and Black-winged Stilt.

¹ Tim, please, allow me to suggest I-C, II-I and III-6.

13.- Physical features:

The reservoir is located on Precambrian metasedimentary materials, forming the *Esquisto-Grawaquico* Complex in the Central-Iberian area of the Hesperic Massiv.

The relief is very affected by the erosion, forming an *almost-plain* (penillanura), where the palaeozoic quarcitic mountains (Vg. Sierra de Pela) are highlighting on the erosive plain.

14.- Ecological features:

It is possible to distinguish between the aquatic environment, the islands when the pond level is high enough and the land surfaces being discovered when the level is lower. In the water there are macrophyte prairies. In some islands still remain several trees belonging to the old riverine forests (tamarisc and rosebay) Others have some Wild-olive Trees and Oak Trees. The land surfaces develop temporary prairies when water level is lower.

Maximum water level is reached at the end of may, just before the beginning of the irrigating campaign, being the lowest by the winter.

Surrounding the site, climacic Oak Tree and *Pyrus* forests are well developed, but at bigger distances tree-densities are kept lower in order to improve prairie growing and also to be cultivated with non-irrigated cereals. In the banks located near the river, Wild-olive Trees develop well. Nearby the wall, the forests were removed giving rise to serial stages of prairies where locally appear some non-irrigated cereal crops.

15.- Land tenure/ownership of:

a) site: Orellana reservoir is a State property (Transports and Public Works Ministry, Confederación Hidrográfica del Guadiana). The surroundings are owned mainly by private particulars although some areas belong to the Councils (Dehesas Boyales²).

b) surrounding area:

16.- Conservation measures taken:

The reservoirs are declared Security Area according to the Law 8/1991 21 december on game in Extremadura, and hunting is forbidden in these areas. In 1991 we have started a habitat management Project in cooperation with the Confederación Hidrográfica del Guadiana and Extremadura University, with the aim of making the islands suitable for waterfowl breeding. The water level is regulated by the Confederation, in such a way that maximum heights are reached by mid-April, in order to avoid flooding in nesting areas in case of eventual increases. Surrounding the islands, moads will be built in order to avoid damages to breeding areas from terrestrial predators (dogs, cats, foxes, rats, etc.) if eventually water level would decrease in June as a consequence of agricultural irrigation.

² This is a very common legal figure in the rural Spain. They are prairies with trees in a low density (dehesa), that are used for cattle feeding.

17.- Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

A commission aimed to manage the reservoir, has been created by the Environmental Agency and the Confederación Hidrográfica del Guadiana. The affected Municipalities will designate a representative to cooperate in writing the Management Plan.

Orellana Reservoir is one of the most important sites to be included in the future Spanish Network of Extremaduran Protected Areas.

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

a) site: This is one of the latest great regulating reservoirs of the Guadiana basin and it is being used to irrigate Vegas Altas (High Fertile Plains), and until 1991 also partially Vegas Bajas. This pond also supplies drinking water to neighbouring villages. Sports like hunting, fishing, marina and bathing, are also common. In the surrounding banks, stockbreeding and non irrigated cereal agriculture are the main activities, being both complemented by hunting.

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

a) at the site: The main problems here are illegal wildfowl hunting, disturbances to birds from anglers, boats and bathing as well as water oscillations if these activities are performed without control. They have very negative impacts on the birds.

b) in the surrounding/catchment: Illegal urban developments, uncontrolled camping and excessive hunting.

20.- Hydrological and physical values:

Orellana Reservoir is the third and the latest great regulating pond in Guadiana River. Upstream, Cijara and García Sola ponds are used to regulate water level in Orellana, from where agricultural surfaces belonging to the "Plan Badajoz" are irrigated. Siltation processes are scarce because the biggest proportion of sediments are kept in ponds located upstream.

21.- Social and cultural values:

Fisheries are not significant, since only american crayfish extraction and sport fishing are common. Its water is used mainly for irrigations and secondly for urban supply to neighbouring villages. Touristic activities (bathing, marina, etc.) have been significantly increased in the recent years, and this has meant important developmental resources in the area.

The reservoir floods several abandoned hermitages.

22.- Noteworthy fauna:

The Orellana Reservoir is the area where more important winter, post-breeding and summer concentrations of Black Storks may be found, since groups bigger than 100 birds have been registered. Its islands hold one of the biggest colonies of Gull-billed Tern (500 pairs in 1991). Numbers of Pratincole, Black-winged Stilt and Little Tern are also important.

In winter, numbers of birds sheltering in the pond are bigger than 65.000 (1990). The area highlights as the most important wintering site for Common Crane (18.000 birds). Other wintering birds are Gulls (25.000), Anatidae (20.000) and Cormorants (1.000).

Between the mammals, is particularly important the high density of Otters. Important birds other than wildfowl are raptors, more or less related to the reservoir (Bonelli's Eagle, Golden Eagle, Eagle Owl, etc.), reaching high densities as well.

23.- Noteworthy flora:

Surrounding vegetation is basically constituted by Oak forests, normally kept at low densities to improve stockbreeding exploitations. The most important tree species are: Oak, Cork Oak, Wild Olive Tree, Juniper and Gall-oak. Mediterranean scrub is very typical, with *Cistus*, heather, etc.

24.- Current scientific research and facilities:

Since 1987, the Environmental Agency staff is carrying out annual censuses in order to know how birds use the reservoir and their population trends. Since 1990, a team belonging to Extremadura University is making some research about shorebird populations.

25.- Current conservation education:

Since 1991, several dams are being built in the bottoms of the reservoir aimed to the stabilization of water level and to make them suitable for waterbirds. Additionally, in these areas, birdwatching observatories and visitors centres are being built.

26.- Current recreation and tourism.-

In the recent years some touristic projects started to develop. These, are located near the reservoir's wall (Orellana la Vieja) but for the moment they are scarcely important.

27.- Management authority:

Agencia de Medio Ambiente, Junta de Extremadura.
c/ Enrique Diaz Canedo s/n
06800 Mérida (Badajoz).

Confederación Hidrográfica del Guadiana
Public Works and Transport Ministry (MOPT)
Don Benito (Badajoz).

28.- Jurisdiction:

Regional level: Junta de Extremadura

National level: MOPT.

29.- Bibliographical references:

See annex I

30.- Reasons for inclusion:

Populations of Cranes, Gull-billed Tern, Anatidae, Little Tern, Pratincole and Black-winged Stilt.

31.- Map of the site:

Enclosed