

FILE No 2

1. Source: Secrétariat d'état auprès du premier ministre
chargé de l'environnement
Direction de la Protection de la Nature
14 boulevard du Général Leclerc
92524 Neuilly sur Seine Cedex

2. Date: September 1990

3. Name of site: Etangs de la Champagne Humide

4. Country: France

5. Ref: **7FR002**

6. Date of Ramsar designation: 04/08/1991

7. Geographical coordinates: 48°35'N 04°45'E

8. Location:

The Etangs de la Champagne Humide are situated in the departments of Marne, Aube and Haute-Marne, in the region of Champagne-Ardenne. The site is 170 km to the south-east of Paris.

The boundaries of the Ramsar site are:

- to the north, the autoroutre de l'Est (A 4 - E 50)
- to the south, the autoroute A 26 and Troyes
- to the west, the edge of Champagne Humide and Vitry le François
- to the east, Saint Dizier and the edge of Lorraine.

IGN maps nos. 103 and 104 (1/250 000).

9. Area: Ramsar site = 135,000 ha

10. Altitude: 100 to 350 m

11. Overview:

The site is a large river, lake and forest complex consisting of ponds, lakes-reservoirs, canals, gravel pits, valleys and forests. It has varied plant communities and a remarkable

fauna. The waterfowl is particularly striking. The site may be divided into three principal areas:

- a central area encompassing the lac du Der-Chantecoq or Marne reservoir and its side-ponds (étang des Landres, étang du Grand Coulon and étang de la Forêt);
- on a level with Montier-en-Der, the grasslands of the Voire basin, the étang de la Horre and its surrounding tracts of forest; and
- in the south, the Parc Naturel Régional de la Forêt d'Orient, incorporating the forêt d'Orient, the lac d'Orient or Seine reservoir, the Aube lake-reservoir (currently being filled) and part of the Aube valley.

12. Physical features:

Climatically, the region is a meeting-point between oceanic and continental influences. Rainfall varies between 650 mm and 750 mm, and the average annual temperature is about 10°C.

The topography of the site is that of a moderately undulating plain traversed by large valleys (the Marne valley in the north and the Aube valley in the south).

The omnipresence of water is due to the impermeable geological substratum (principally marls and clays). The soils are predominantly hydromorphic and acidic. The hydrographic system is dense and very hierarchically organized. There are numerous ponds.

There is a striking contrast between the ponds, which are generally shallow and whose muds are light, fine and rich in organic material, and the artificial reservoirs, which are deep and designed to regulate the flow of the Marne (Der-Chantecoq), the Aube and the Seine (Orient) and whose substratum is typically hard and coarse (sands, gravels) and poor in organic material.

Their hydrology is also different. The regime of the reservoirs is markedly fluvial, with high-water levels alternating with low-water levels in spring and August-September respectively, whereas the ponds are stagnant and have far less pronounced low-water levels.

These differences are reflected in the composition of the plant life, which accounts in turn for the site's great ecological diversity (a diversity further enriched by the watercourses and the forests).

13. Ecological features:

The habitats of the site, based on the CORINE typology, are:

- still water
- running water
- wet meadows, plants of the genus *Phragmites*

- mesophylous grassland
- riparian vegetation
- marshes and wetlands
- alluvial forests, 'ripisylores'[= ?]
- broad-leaved deciduous forests
- agricultural land and highly artificialized land
- orchards, poplar groves, tree plantations
- land under cultivation.

*** Lac du Der:**

This has an area of 4,800 ha. Like all recently created artificial lakes (1974), it was rapidly colonized by migratory waterfowl. It is an important wintering ground and stopover point for several species of Anatidae and, in particular, Rallidae (geese, wigeon, cranes). In January 1982, it supported almost 60,000 [? = illegible] birds, including 35,000 ducks (Anas).

*** Etang des Landres, étang du Grand Coulon and étang de la Forêt:**

These have noteworthy aquatic and sub-aquatic vegetation, including 23 rare species (see point 23).

*** Etang de la Horre:**

The abundance of the avifauna of this pond and its encircling forest is attributable to the interaction of pond and forest, the presence of extensive belts of marsh and the shallowness of the water.

The site is one of the few remaining breeding grounds in Champagne-Humide of *Botaurus stellaris* (Eurasian bittern) and *Ardea purpurea* (purple heron). It is used for nesting by *Porzana porzana* (spotted crane), whose numbers are declining throughout the region. It is also an excellent breeding ground for Anatidae and one of the very few ponds in the region to attract large numbers of aquatic nest-building species. As many as 1,500 ducks may be present at any one time in the migration period.

The raptors, which comprise seven nest-building species (including 4 or 5 pairs of *Circus aeruginosus* (marsh harrier)), derive particular benefit from the complementarity of pond and forest.

The étang de la Horre is of proven importance for the variety of its Odonata species (36), whose populations are often considerable, and for the presence of six rare species, which are either threatened or at the limit of their range.

The site is also of great botanical importance because of the presence of 16 species which are seldom found in northern and north-eastern France. *Ranunculus lingua* and *Potamogeton compressus* are notable examples.

Large expanses are covered by the characteristic plant communities (*Hydrocharidetum*, *Utricularietum*, *Potamo-Najadetum*, *Glycerietum maximae*, *Phragmitetum*, *Caricetum ripariae*, *Typhetum*).

*** Lac de la forêt d'Orient or Seine reservoir:**

This was created in 1966. Since it hardly ever freezes over, it has been responsible for a significant increase in the population of migratory birds frequenting the site. With an area of 2,300 ha, it is one of the very few wintering grounds of *Anser fabalis* (bean goose) and, apart from the Der lake, is the only site in France to be used regularly as a wintering site by *Haliaeetus albicilla* (white-tailed sea eagle).

Overall, the most numerous species are the *Gaviidae* (divers), *Podicipedidae* (grebes), *Rallidae* (rails, crakes, coots, moorhens), *Ardeidae* (bitterns, herons, egrets), *Anatidae* (swans, geese, ducks), *Laridae* (gulls), waders and raptors.

Phalacrocorax carbo (great cormorant) and *Ciconia ciconia* (white stork) are also present.

14. Land tenure/ownership of:

- Private and public property
- The étang de la Horre and the lac du Der are owned by a joint association for the development of tourism.

15. Conservation measures taken:

- Clearance of weeds and removal of silt (étang de la Horre).
- Wildlife refuge (5,100 ha) created in 1977 on the lac du Der to protect migratory birds. Since 1986, the lake has also been a special protection zone pursuant to EEC Directive 79/409.
- Wildlife refuge (1,360 ha) in the Trois Fontaines area.
- Wildlife refuge in certain areas of the Marne valley which have a strong influence on migratory flows.
- Parc Naturel Régional de la Forêt d'Orient.
- The lac de la forêt d'Orient (2,500 ha) is a special protection zone pursuant to EEC Directive 79/409.

16. Conservation measures proposed:

- Proposal to make the étang de la Horre a nature reserve.
- Proposal to make the natural grassland areas of the Voire basin a nature reserve.

17. Land use:

- Agriculture (livestock farming is still the main activity, although the grassland areas are now being reduced).
- Fishing (carp, roach, tench, pike, bream).
- Forestry.
- Industry on the outskirts of the urban areas (St. Didier, Vitry le François).
- Hunting.
- Expanding tourism.

18. Changes in land use and development projects:

The building of the Aube reservoir (now being filled) is radically transforming the ecosystem of the area, in that the aquatic environment is replacing the forest environment. This should enhance the site's attractiveness to migratory birds.

Many tourism development schemes, mostly concerning the lakes-reservoirs, are at either the implementation stage or the study stage.

19. Threats and problems:

The following activities could reduce the site's attractiveness to migratory birds and cause water pollution: the conversion of grassland into arable land, drainage, [word illegible] and poplar-grove planting, works affecting the rivers (Marne, Aube, Seine) and the development of leisure activities on the great lakes.

20. Hydrological and biophysical values:

The lakes-reservoirs fulfil an essential hydrological role, in that they prevent flooding at the end of winter and in spring, while maintaining adequate river flows in summer and autumn.

21. Social and cultural values:

The area is of considerable historical, architectural and environmental interest (soldier monks of the Ordre du Temple; châteaux, churches, market-places dating from the 11th, 16th and 17th centuries; rural areas).

Social and cultural values are evinced particularly well by the 'social function' of the local flora as a source of food, feed supplements, craft materials, medicine and plant lore. It also fulfils an aesthetic function.

22. Noteworthy fauna:

- *Grus grus* * (common crane)
- *Ardea cinerea* (grey heron)
- *Ardea purpurea* * (purple heron)
- *Egretta garzetta* * (little egret)
- *Nycticorax nycticorax** (black-crowned night heron)
- *Ixobrychus minutus* * (little bittern)
- *Botaurus stellaris* * (Eurasian bittern)
- *Ciconia nigra* * (black stork)
- *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* * (Bewick's swan)
- *Cygnus olor* (mute swan)
- *Cygnus cygnus* * (Whooper swan)
- *Anser fabalis* (bean goose)
- *Anas clypeata* (northern shoveler)
- *Anas crecca* (green-winged teal)
- *Accipiter gentilis* * (goshawk)
- *Haliaeetus albicilla* * (white-tailed sea eagle)
- *Falco peregrinus* * (peregrine falcon)

- *Falco vespertinus* (red-footed falcon)
- *Porzana parva* * (little crane)
- *Porzana porzana* * (spotted crane)
- *Numenius aequata* (Eurasian curlew)
- *Larus canus* (common gull)
- *Picus canus* * (grey-headed woodpecker)
- *Acrocephalus paludicola* * (aquatic warbler)
- *Vanellus vanellus* (northern lapwing)
- *Phalacrocorax carbo* * (great cormorant)

* Species requiring special protection pursuant to
EEC Directive 79/409

23. Noteworthy flora:

- *Trapa natans*
- *Nymphoides peltata*
- *Najas marina*
- *Potamogeton acutifolius*
- *Potamogeton trichoides*
- *Ranunculus sceleratus*
- *Airopsis agrostidea*

24. Scientific research and facilities:

Over the past decade, the following bodies have taken an interest in the natural heritage of the area and, in particular, its most interesting sites (the great lakes): the Office National de la Chasse, the Champagne-Ardenne DRAE, the Parc Naturel Régional de la Forêt d'Orient and the Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres.

Various studies have been carried out by local scientific associations - Centre Ornithologique Champagne-Ardenne (COCA), Union Régionale Champagne-Ardenne pour la Nature et l'Environnement (URCANE) and the Besançon Faculty of Sciences - often with a view to protecting what is perceived as an outstanding environment (see point 29, bibliography).

Among the noteworthy avifauna, the common crane (*Grus grus*) is the most closely monitored species. Regular counts are made and records are kept of the bird's feeding grounds. In 1990, a Community environment action programme was launched with a view to protecting the crane's wintering and feeding grounds.

A development plan covering the Parc Naturel Régional de la Forêt d'Orient, which accounts for one-third of the Ramsar site, draws attention to some forty sites of botanical importance and about fifteen sites of ornithological importance.

Lastly, mention must be made of the counts organized by the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB).

25. Educational value:

There are plans to create a nature centre on the site of the

lac du Der-Chantecoq. With a view to promoting this site, catering for the specific interests of visitors and heightening awareness of the richness and fragility of the natural environment, the following are proposed:

- shows, recreational activities and provision of general information (at 700 m² museum situated on banks of lake at the Chantecoq port, with common crane as its logo and a permanent exhibition on the migration of birds);
- 'animation' [= publicity events ?], facilities for visiting specialists, educational activities (at the Grands Parts farm);
- field studies (tours around ponds and lake).

26. Recreation and tourism:

- The lac du Der and the lac de la forêt d'Orient are recreational sites: water sports such as sailing, diving, swimming and speedboat racing.
- Educational activities (see point 25).
- The Parc Naturel Régional de la Forêt d'Orient has created a signposted (educational) walk in the Forêt du Temple and is planning fact-finding tours of the countryside.

27. Management authority:

- Communes, landowners.
- Joint association for the development of tourism in the lac du Der area. Joint association for the development and management of the Parc Naturel Régional de la Forêt d'Orient, Office National des Forêts, Office National de la Chasse, fishing and hunting federations, ornithological associations, Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres, etc.

28. Jurisdiction

- Conseil régional de Champagne-Humide, general committees.
- Government agencies: Délégation Régional à l'Architecture et à l'Environnement (DRAE), Direction Départementale de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt (DDAF), Direction Départementale de l'Équipement (DDE), Direction Départementale des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales (DDASS).

29. Bibliography:

- S.D.A.U. du Parc Naturel Régional de la Forêt d'Orient - 1982
- Stationnement des grues cendrées en Champagne (= Champagne as a site of the common crane) - Centre Ornithologique Champagne-Ardenne, for the Secrétariat d'Etat chargé de l'Environnement - 1987-1988

- Bilan écologique des étangs des Landres, du Grand Coulon et de la Forêt (Marne) ou étangs latéraux du Der (= Ecological assessment of the Landres, Grand Coulon and La Forêt (Marne) ponds or the Der side-ponds) - AREPE Laboratoire de Taxonomie et Phytosociologie de Besançon, for the Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres - April 1989

- Eléments pour une gestion intégrée, les oiseaux et le réservoir Seine (= Birds and the Seine reservoir - elements of an integrated management plan) - URCANE, for the PNR de la Forêt d'Orient - June 1982

- Dossier de mise en réserve de l'étang de la Horre (= File on converting the Horre pond into a reserve) - URCANE, for DRAE - December 1981

- Dossier de mise en réserve naturelle des prairies naturelles du bassin de la Voire (Aube et Haute-Marne) (= File on converting the natural grassland areas of the Voire basin (Aube and Haute-Marne) into a nature reserve) - URCANE, for DRAE - December 1981

30. Inclusion criteria:

The site can be included in the list of wetlands of international importance inasmuch as it meets the following criteria, which were approved at the Third Conference of the Contracting Parties:

1a: While being exceptional, it is a good representative example of a west-European continental wetland.

1c: Situated at the edge of the Seine basin, the area plays a decisive hydrological role for the basin as a whole, especially as regards the supply of drinking water to Paris and its suburbs.

2c: The site is of special value as a habitat of migratory and wintering birds.

3a: The site supports more than 20,000 birds in the migration and/or wintering period.

The lac de la forêt d'Orient and the lac du Der-Chantecoq are sites of international importance for *Phalacrocorax carbo* (great cormorant), *Anser fabalis* (bean goose), *Vanellus vanellus* (northern lapwing), *Anas strepera* (gadwall), *Grus grus* (common crane) and *Anas crecca* (green-winged teal). They provide a habitat for populations of *Haliaeetus albicilla* (white-tailed sea eagle), a species included in the last ICPS world red list.

31. Ecological changes linked to human intervention:

Over the past decade, the quality of the waters has been deteriorating because of the increase in cultivated land in the catchment area, which contains less and less natural grassland.

32. Maps: Attached