

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

1. **Country:** France
2. **Date:** 28 December 1992
3. **Ref:** 6FR009
4. **Name and address of compiler:**
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5. **Name of wetland:** Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin de la Guadeloupe
6. **Date of Ramsar designation:** 08/12/1993
7. **Geographical coordinates:** 16°20'N 61°35'W
8. **General location:**
Guadeloupe occupies a midway position in the island chain of the Lesser Antilles. The lagoon and associated littoral zones open onto the Caribbean Sea and are connected with the Petit Cul-de-Sac Marin by the River Salée, which separates the volcanic island of Basse-Terre from the limestone island of Grande-Terre. The site is a few kilometres from Pointe-à-Pitre, the main town of Guadeloupe, which is a mono-departmental overseas region.
9. **Area:** About 20,000 ha, including 8,000 ha of land
10. **Wetland type:** A, C, I, R, T
11. **Altitude:** Average = 1 m (- 30 m to + 35 m)
12. **Overview:**
Vast lagoon, bounded to the north by a coral reef. The associated littoral zone consists of many types of 'terrestrial' wetlands: brackish marshes, wet meadows, mud-flats, freshwater swamp forests and, most importantly, mangroves.

13. **Physical features:**

The lagoon has an old submerged hydrographic system. All its water, whether it be of mainland origin (mostly from the Goyave Grande Rivière, plus catchment area of more than 130 km²) or of marine origin (from the open sea or the Petit Cul-de-Sac Marin), flows from East to West. At 29°C, it is amongst the warmest water to be found in the region.

To the south, the lagoon is encircled by more or less undulating plains, overlaid by lateritic clays (Basse-Terre, plaine des Aymes) or chalky and hydromorphic soils ['vertisols' = ?].

These plains end in a marshy area contiguous to the sea, where the mangrove grows on argillaceous alluvial deposits or organic soils (root-based muds and peats).

Ranging from 1,500 to 1,700 mm, the annual rainfall of the region is characterized by considerable interannual variability, which is reflected in changes in the physico-chemical parameters regulating the ecosystems.

14. **Ecological features:**

Terrestrial environments:

- * mangrove forest - coastal mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*)
 - red and black shrub mangrove
 - tall mangrove
- * swamp forest - *Pterocarpus officinalis*
- * inundable areas with herbaceous plant communities:
 - *Cladium* and *Agrostichum* (brackish marshes)
 - *Rhynchospora* and *Thelypteris* (freshwater marshes)
 - *Phloxerus* and *Sporobolus* (wet meadows)
 - plants of the Cyperaceae, Gramineae and Papilionaceae families (wet meadows)
- * mud-flats - *Rhizophora mangle*

Marine environments:

- * coral reefs
- * underwater grass communities:
 - *Thalassia*

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

(a) site

- Public maritime area (DPM) owned by the State
- Public lake area (DPL) owned by the State
- Local communities (communes) and private landowners

(b) surrounding area

- Local community and private property

16. **Conservation measures taken:**

- Nature Reserve of the Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin (Decree no. 87-361 of 23 November 1987)
 - Biosphere Reserve of the Guadeloupe Archipelago - MAB/UNESCO programme (November 1993)
17. **Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

Management plan in preparation.

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

(a) site

- outside the Nature Reserve: small-scale fishing in mangrove areas (clams, crabs, etc.) and the lagoon (fish, 'lambis' = ? crustaceans, etc.);
- outside the Nature Reserve: hunting
- growing of food crops (watercress, Madeira = ?, etc.) and extensive rearing of tethered cattle.

(b) surroundings/catchment

- intensive production of sugar-cane and bananas;
- extensive rearing of tethered cattle.

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

(a) at the site

- * Development of tourist infrastructures (marina) on the coast.
- * There are plans for a spa and an industrial site on the Port-Louis marshes.

(b) in the surroundings/catchment

- * Considerable urban pressure on the edge of the mangroves (unauthorized rubbish tips, deforestation, etc.).
- * Pollution from the Petit Cul-de-Sac Marin (via the River Salée) and the Goyave Grande Rivière catchment area (pesticides, fertilisers, vinasse, etc.).
- * Construction of the port-airport link road (Rocade nord).
- * 'Basculement' [= tilting ?] of the airport.

20. **Hydrological and biophysical values:**

Important functions are fulfilled by the mangrove forests:

- * biological functions: - key function as a nursery
- feeding ground and stopover point
for
migrating birds
- * physical and chemical functions: - protection of low-lying
coast against erosion
- chemical regulation of
the
water
- air purification

event
- buffer effect in the
of storm tides

21. **Social and cultural values:**

- Important source of fish, molluscs and crustaceans for fishermen of the six neighbouring communes (Saint-Rose, Lamentin, Baie-Mahault, Abymes, Petit-canal, Port-Louis).
- Possible facilities for aquaculture (ponds).

22. **Noteworthy fauna:**

Very varied avifauna (migratory, non-migratory and nest-building birds, accidentals, etc.):

- seabirds (brown pelican, tern, frigate bird, etc.);
- small grallatores ('bec crochu' = ?, 'aile blanche' = ?, godwit, plover, etc.);
- many waders (sandpiper, etc.);
- ducks ('sarcelle américaine' = ?, 'fuligule à tête noire' = ?, divers, wigeon, etc.);
- various herons (egrets including cattle egret, 'crabier bois' = ?, 'kio' = ?, 'grand héron gris' = ?);
- others (kingfisher, common moorhen, rail, osprey, black woodpecker, etc.).

23. **Noteworthy flora:**

One of the most important mangrove and lake forest areas in the Lesser Antilles.

24. **Scientific research and facilities:**

- Monitoring of the ecosystems of the reefs and underwater grass communities
- Impact of Cyclone Hugo (Oct. 87) on the mangrove; regeneration; productivity, etc.
- Monitoring of the passerine populations of the littoral forests.

25. **Education and information:**

- Information booklet on the Nature Reserve of the Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin;
- School visits organized;
- Footpath supported by piles and observation post now under construction.

26. **Recreation and tourism:**

- Organized mass tourism: boats carrying 10 to 50 persons (sometimes more than 150 persons); îlet à Caret the main destination; crowds throughout the year
- Non-organized tourism, especially at weekends and during school holidays

27. **Management authority:**

Parc National de la Guadeloupe
Habitation Beausoleil

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28. **Jurisdiction:**

- Ministère de l'Environnement
- Région Guadeloupe

29. **Bibliographical references:**

Documentation of the Park (ISIS/PNGUA bibliography)

* IMBERT. D., BLAND F. and F. RUSSIER, 1988. Les milieux humides du littoral guadeloupéen (= Wetlands of the Guadeloupe coast). ONF/RNGCSM, Guadeloupe, 61 pp.

* Etude de la Mangrove et de la zone côtière en Guadeloupe (= Study on the Guadeloupe mangrove and littoral zone). INRA/CRAAG, 1981, 218 pp. typed report

* Collectif, 1985. Le Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin. Action CORDET, 220 pp. typed report

* BELBEOC'H, B., 1983. Les oiseaux de la mangrove (= Birds of the mangrove) No 9 - Parc Naturel/ONF Guadeloupe, 150 pp.

30. **Reasons for inclusion:**

1(a) - 2(b) - 2(c) - 3(b)