

## Ramsar Information Sheet

Translated from the original document in French

**1. Date this sheet was completed:**

January 1997

**2. Country:**

France

**3. Reference number:** 7FR018

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

Diren Picardie - 56 rue Jules Barni - 8004- Amiens Cedex

**5. Name of wetland:** Baie de Somme

**6. Date of inclusion in the Ramsar list:** 30/01/98

**7. Geographical coordinates:**

longitude OG 80 - latitude SS G 80

50°14 N - 1°33 E

**8. Location:** Somme estuary - Picardy Region - 20 km from Abbéville

**9. Area:** 17,000 ha

**10. Wetland type:** A, E, F,

**11. Altitude:** sea level

**12. Description:**

The Somme Bay is the largest natural estuary (no port, no industry) between the Mont St. Michel bay and the Veys in the South and The Netherlands towards the North. It consists of a vast sandy and muddy area and a 2500 ha large grass area. It is famous for its biodiversity and avifauna, and for its resting area for migrating waterbirds. More than 120 species nest nearby and use the Bay during their annual cycle. The Bay is also famous for its flowers and its "intérêt phytocénotique".

**13. Physical features:**

The Somme estuary is the largest macro tidal estuary (important tidal fluctuations) in Northern France. The latest postglacial sedimentation (-1200 years) created the maritime plain of Picardy. These polders (called lowlands) were encroached on the Somme, the Maye and the Authie deltas.

One of the geomorphological interests is the existence of a gradient of estuarine facies.

**14. Ecological features:**

The mouth of the Somme Bay shows some "halophile" vegetation. 37 groupings were identified; most of them are inscribed in the Habitat Directive. The most important bibliographical reference as far as this matter is concerned is : "Etude floristique et phytocénotique des sites littoraux de la Réserve Naturelle de la Baie de Somme : propositions de gestion conservatoire". September 1995. National Botanical Museum

of Bailleul/Association for the development of the Picardy Coast. Noteworthy is also the salty meadow with waterlilacs (*Limonium vulgare*). Their harvest is limited to family harvesting (prefectorial decree dated 27.6.1990).

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

- (a) The site is mainly state owned + coastal museum + local Council + some private plots.
- (b) surroundings are privately owned or owned by the local Council.

**16. Conservation measures :**

- The Natural Reserve, created by Ministerial decree of 21 March 1994, covers the whole Hunting Reserve of the Somme Bay.
- The rest of the Hunting Reserve, situated towards the North, is considered as the Hunting Reserve of the Authie Bay.
- Hunting Reserve of Hable d'Ault
- Protected Area of the Natural Reserve : 12 ha (Prefectorial decree of 26.7.1994).
- Site registered (Somme Baye and North and South coast) since 20.1.97
- Agri-environmental measures (Hable d'Ault), Basse Vallée of the Somme, lowlands of the Authie Bay).
- One of the objectives is to save the feeding areas of wintering ducks by maintaining the natural meadows humid.

Implementation of Article L146-6

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

- Classification of the site
- Management Plan (1995) put forward by CNPN
- Registration of the site
- Suggestion for a pre-emption area (Basse Vallée de la Somme - 1200 ha)

**18. Current occupation; principal human activities**

(a) on the site:

- pastures with sheep
- hunting (area outside the Natural Reserve)
- shellfish farming
- tourism (ornithological park, Crotoy beaches, Quend and Fort-Mahon beaches)
- fishing (traditional methods)
- ballast mining

(b) surroundings :

- traditional agriculture (livestock farming)

**19. Factors adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects**

- Silting up of the Somme Bay: owing to the production of slikke which covers the tide twice a day. Molluscs, shellfish and "annelides plyphetes" live in the sandy expanse. They serve as nutrition for migrating avifaune (winter and summer), especially for Anatidae, Limicoles and Laridae. One kind of molluscs, the *Cerastoderma edule*, is of particular interest to the local population. This environment slowly disappears, due to the development of the "mollieres" (4-5 ha/year). Dredging of the area is necessary.

- Motocross, cars etc.

Vegetation in the dunes (especially *Calystegia soldanella*, *Crambe maritima* and *Leymus arenarius*) is particularly sensitive to this kind of development. Also certain birds (avocets and plovers), which nest in these areas, are bothered by this.

- Eutrophication of the Bay: should be limited in the near future
- Mine explosions: destruction of war weapons in the Bay causes disturbances to birds and seals. A replacement area should be found in the near future.

## 20. Hydrological and physical values

- Strong tidal range and hydrodynamics
- Deposits of sediments which leads to the silting up of the Bay

## 21. Social and Cultural values

The area is a real gem on the Picardy coast. The Somme Bay is known for its small fishing ports (Le Crotoy, Le Hourdel), its possibilities for waterfowl hunting, its nature discovery possibilities (Marquenterre ornithological park) and its scientific interest (seals, birds).

An international film festival (de l'Oise et de la Vie Sauvage de la Baie de Somme) is organised by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Abbéville.

## 22. Fauna

The Somme estuary is one of the most important European resting areas for migrating avifauna. It is situated on important migratory routes from the British Isles, Scandinavia, The Netherlands and from Germany and Russia. 321 bird species have been identified (65% of the European avifauna). The site is classified as an "area of particular interest for birds" (Z.I.C.O.). The site is also important for the protection of the *Tadorna tadorna* (between 10.000 and 14.700 winter here).

Other species include :

- *Anser anser*: between 2000 and 6000 certain years.
- *Anas acuta* : usually more than 1000 migrating birds during the winter.
- *Pluvialis squatarola* : at certain times up to 1000 birds
- *Charadrius hiaticula* : more than 1000 during the migration period in autumn and winter.
- *Charadrius alexandrinus* : up to 540 migrating individuals
- *Tringa totanus* : between 2000 and 2500 migrating individuals
- *Calidris canutus* : 6250 migrating individuals. During certain years, the Somme Bay is an important stopover site for birds coming directly from Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania.
- The Somme Bay represents an important nesting site for avifauna : 121 species nest here regularly. Rare and threatened species (in France) also nest here. Between the most important, we distinguish :
- *Tadorna tadorna* : one of the 4 French bastions
- *Anas clypeata* : 80-90 pairs
- *Anas querquedula* : 30-35 pairs
- *Charadrius hiaticula* : 1-6 pairs
- *Charadrius alexandrinus* : declining
- *Recurvirostra avocetta* : 86-106 pairs, depending on the year. 38 pairs in 1994.
- *Egretta garzetta* : 40 pairs
- *Circus cyaneus* : 8-10 pairs
- *Limosa limosa* : 1-2 pairs

- *Luscinia svecica* : more than 50 pairs

The site is an important stopover for :

*Platalea leucorodia* : more than 100 individuals during post nuptial migration. The stopover is important for young birds born in The Netherlands.

Furthermore, the following rare or threatened (in France) batrachians were spotted:

- *Bufo calamita*

- *Hyla arborea* : Flourishing numbers of this threatened European species.

- *Pelodytes punctatus* : rare species in Picardy and vulnerable in France.

The Somme Bay is a passing through zone for sea trout.

Finally, the Somme Bay is an important site for *Phoca vitulina*. They use the site permanently, with 34 individuals in 1996 and 4 births.

### 23. Flora

Certain rare species, such as *Salicornia pusilla* and *Parapholis strigosa* can be found in the Bay. The *Holimione pedunculata* has not been spotted lately, but its number is still growing in the Authie Bay. In the Maye Baye, *Bostrychia scorpioides* and *Halimione portulacoides* can be found. In the surroundings (Marquenterre dunes), *Elymo-Ammophiletum arenariae* and *Euphorbio-Agropyretum junceiformis* can be found. *Atriplex Laciniatta* and *Leymus arenarius* are remarkable elements in these dunes. Behind this first line of dunes, black dunes can be found with the following species : *Festuca filiformis*.

The following species can be found in the humid coastal meadows : *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, *Calamagrostis epigejos* and *Ophioglossum-Calamagrosietum epigeji*.

Other species in the sandy basins include : *Juncus subnodulosus* and *Teucrium scordium*.

Among the 275 species found in 1995 in the Natural Reserve, more than 100 represent a patrimonial interest and about 20 species represent a special character for Northern France (e.g. *Liparis Loeselii*, *Leymus arenarius* and *Crambe maritima*).

The whole area is on the list of sites likely to be appointed as important site within the community under the Habitat Directive.

### 24. Scientific research

The University of Saint Valéry-sur-Somme carries out the following research:

- functioning and evolution of the ecosystem of the Somme Baye;

- eutrophication process and consequences on the "benthique" population by GEMEL and IFREMER.

- hydrodynamics and sedimentation by the Laboratory for sedimentology and coastal geochemistry. University of Picardy.

- study on the functioning of the Somme Bay for waterbirds (number of birds the area can accommodate, disturbing factors).

### 25. Education and information

Marquenterre ornithological park which forms an important element for students and tourists.

University-level training periods at the Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme station (within Europe).

## **26. Recreation and tourism**

see also item no 21.

- discovering nature and waterfowl hunting
- environmental interest
- recreational interest (rally, kayaking)

## **27. Management Authority**

Syndicat Mixte pour l'Aménagement de la Côte Picarde (SMACOPI).  
1, Place de l'Amiral Courbet - 80100 Abbéville

Local Hunting Associations.

## **28. Jurisdiction**

State : Public maritime area

## **29. Bibliographical references**

Several scientific studies (see Appendix 1)

## **30. Reasons for inclusion**

It is the largest estuarial area in Northern France (1 a-b)  
Interesting area for waterbirds - see item 22 (3 b-c)  
Important group of rare and extremely rare species (320 bird species, seals).  
Botanical interest (2 a-b-c-d).

## **31. Map**

1/50.000e and 1/100.000e