

1. Country: Portugal

2. Date: 28 May 1993

3. Ref: 7PT008

4. Name and address of compiler: A. M. Teixeira, SNPRCN / CEMPA, R. Filipe Folque, 46, 3º, 1000 LISBOA, Portugal, Tel: 351 1 352 30 18 / Fax: 351 1 57 47 71

5. Name of wetland: Lagoa de Sto André / Lagoa da Sancha (Sto. André & Sancha lagoons).

6. Date of Ramsar designation: 08/05/1996

7. Geographical coordinates: 38° 03' N; 008° 48' W

8. General location: Regiao Alentejo / Sines

9. Area: 2638 ha

10. Wetland type: E; J; N

11. Altitude: 47 m (maximum); 0 m (minimum)

12. Overview: Shallow brackish coastal lagoons on sand dune system in SW Portugal. Salinity values changing widely and most influenced by occasional freshwater inputs and cycles of temporary communication to the sea. Intense human occupation in some areas at Sto. André.

13. Physical features: Natural lagoons in sedimentary beds on the extensive sand dune system extended from the Sado estuary south to Sines. Freshwater inputs based on precipitation and runoff in comparatively small catchment areas. Water permanent through the year but levels fluctuate widely. Tidal influences moderate and only when the lagoons are open to the sea. Climate temperate with Atlantic and strong Mediterranean influences.

14. Ecological features: Shallow water with deep sediment layers and well-developed plant growth. Extensive reed beds (*Phragmites*) in some areas, gradually merging into agricultural areas and pine forest mixed with other species further inland. Characteristic shrubby vegetation in the dry areas on the sand dunes separating the lagoon from the sea.

15. Land tenure/ ownership of:

(a) site: Most of the area is State-owned but effective management practices are shared between a number of different bodies.

(b) surrounding area: The sand dunes and many forest areas are State-owned. Agricultural land and urban developments are essentially private.

16. Conservation measures taken: the area currently enjoys some protection at regional level and there are two Special Protection Areas there declared under Article 4 of the EC Wild Birds Directive (79/409).

17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: The area will soon become a Nature Reserve under national law.

18. Current land use: principal human activities in:

(a) site: Traditional fishing in the Sto. André lagoon; summer recreation concentrated around the seashore areas at Sto. André; agriculture and cattle raising in pastureland; traditional hunting party once a year at Sto. André.

(b) surroundings/catchment: Seashore recreation and related activities; there is one camping site on the northern side of the lagoon at Sto. André.

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

(a) at the site: Increasing human influences in and around the area, with most pressures now concentrating on the seashore sites to the North of Sto. André lagoon.

(b) In the surroundings/catchment:: Urban developments and increased disturbance from summer visitors to the area are the most important and obvious threats now.

20. Hydrological and physical values: This wetland is invaluable in preserving the underground water tables in a much wider area around. Coastal erosion is also reduced considerably by dense vegetation developing in certain areas due to increased groundwater retention associated to the wetland.

21. social and cultural values: The Sto. André lagoon has been an important source of fish for many years and has a permanent settlement of local fishermen. The lagoon enjoys also a unique reputation as a major waterfowl refuge in Western Iberia and there is a traditional hunt for Coot *Fulica atra* once a year that attracts many visitors to the area.

22. Noteworthy fauna: The area holds outstanding concentrations of *F. atra* with up to 13,000 birds counted at Sto. André in the post-breeding period. Also important as a breeding and wintering site for duck and other waterfowl. The reed beds are crucial stop over sites for many trans-saharian passerines including *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, *A. arundinaceus*, *A. schoenobaenus*, *Locustella naevia*, *L. luscinioides* and *Hippolais polyglota*. These reed beds further hold important breeding populations of *A. scirpaceus* and *L. luscinioides* with a few pairs of *Charadrius alexandrinus* and *Sterna albifrons* nesting also in seashore areas nearby.

23. Noteworthy flora: The site certainly holds an important sample of marshland vegetation in a comparatively dry area on the SW coast of Iberia.

24. Current scientific research and facilities: The area has some major research projects for some years but now there are only basic monitoring studies under way there. No research facilities available at the site.

25. Current conservation education: Only very basic facilities are currently available to school groups and naturalists visiting the area.

26. Current recreation and tourism: Some areas on the seashore are very much sought after for recreation, mostly during the summer months (June to September). Many hundred visitors may then concentrate in these areas and eventually cause great disturbance to wildlife in and around the lagoons. This applies mostly to the northern side of Sto. André lagoon.

27. Management authority: Legal competences are shared between quite a few departments in the Administration with most of the actual management practices on the Sto. André lagoon now left to the local authorities (Câmara Municipal).

28. Jurisdiction: Jurisdiction both at regional level (Câmara Municipal) and at central level (Min. Environment and other).

29. Bibliographical references: Araújo 1990; Cancela da Fonseca 1989; Grimett & Jones 1989; Rufino 1992; SNPRCN 1992; Teixeira 1984.

30. Reasons for inclusion: The area stands for classification under criteria 1a and 1c; also under criteria 2a, 2b and 2d; the area further classifies under 3b and eventually also under 3c.

31. Map of site: enclosed