



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Belgium

9 Ramsar Site(s) covering 46,944 ha

### De Ijzerbroeken te Diksmuide en Lo-Reninge

Site number: 329 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: West-Vlaanderen  
Area: 2,360 ha | Coordinates: 50°58'59"N 02°51'E | Designation dates: 04-03-1986  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

De Ijzerbroeken te Diksmuide en Lo-Reninge. 04/03/86; Vlaamse Gewest, 2,360 ha, 50°59'N 002°51'E. Added to the Montreux Record, 4 July 1990, removed from the Record, 17 January 1994, replaced on the Record, 17 May 1999. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserve. A shallow, freshwater lake resulting from peat-cutting since the 16th century. Composed of extensive reedbeds and scrub and surrounded by a wet meadow complex. The area supports an interesting flora including rare species, and is particularly important for breeding, staging and wintering birds; nesting species include ducks. The site includes a 60ha water-supply reservoir. Human activities include intense hunting and agriculture. Ramsar site no. 329. Most recent RIS information: 1992.

### Grotte des Emotions

Site number: 1,406 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: Wallonie  
Area: 3 ha | Coordinates: 50°24'N 05°34'E | Designation dates: 24-03-2003  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Grotte des Émotions. 24/03/03; Région Wallone; 3 ha; 50°24'N 005°34'E. Cave of Scientific Interest. Discovered in 1995, the site is an unspoilt karst subterranean cave system, some 250m by 100m in overall extent but comprising a very complex network of chambers and passages more than 2000m long and with three main levels (45m high). It presents a great variety of karst phenomena and features that are of important scientific interest. Little is known of any flora or fauna that may be present. Access to the site is strictly regulated and only research and management activities are permitted. A special committee for the management of the cave has been established. Ramsar site no. 1406. Most recent RIS information: 2004.

### Kalmthoutse Heide

Site number: 330 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: Antwerp  
Area: 2,200 ha | Coordinates: 51°22'59"N 04°28'E | Designation dates: 04-03-1986  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Kalmthoutse Heide. 04/03/86; Vlaamse Gewest; 2,200 ha; 51°23'N 004°28'E. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserve, Landscape Reserve. Bordering the Netherlands, the site consists of heathland, acidic pools, marshes and woodland, on an extensive complex of stabilized inland dunes, along the Scheldt River estuary. Vegetation includes dune stabilizing species, various orchid species, dry and wet heath. The site is important for staging waterbirds and supports over 90% of the dragonfly species (Odonata) found in Belgium. Human activity is limited. Management measures include rabbit and gull control (to limit guano deposition), and sheep grazing to limit tree cover. Ramsar site no. 330. Most recent RIS information: 1992.

## Les Hautes Fagnes

Site number: 1,405 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: Wallonie, Province de Liège.

Area: 9,974 ha | Coordinates: 50°32'14"N 06°07'38"E | Designation dates: 24-03-2003

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Les Hautes Fagnes Ramsar Site is the largest peatland in Belgium and includes around 125 hectares of active raised sphagnum bogs of great ecological interest. The diverse peat habitats host particularly rare species of flora and fauna. The Site is the last refuge for the black grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in Belgium and plays an important role in the conservation of protected species of insects and birds; a significant number of threatened birds use the site for nesting (including the northern shrike *Lanius excubitor* and the ring ouzel *Turdus torquatus*) or as a wintering ground during migration (including the common crane *Grus grus* and the Western marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus*). Threats to the ecological character of the Site include industrial atmospheric pollution, groundwater contamination by the salt spread on the roads during winter and drainage for the plantation of resinous trees. The "Haute Fagnes" LIFE-Nature project has led to important restoration measures on 2,800 ha of peatlands, and consequently an increase in the number of nesting couples of diverse species including the Eurasian hobby and the little ringed plover. A large network of educational activities and scientific research was established around the Site. The Management Plan is currently being revised.

## Marais d'Harchies

Site number: 331 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: Région wallonne, province du Hainaut

Area: 557.1 ha | Coordinates: 50°27'43"N 03°40'49"E | Designation dates: 04-03-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a complex of wet grasslands, ponds and marshes fringed by reedbeds and fed by rainfall and groundwater. It supports a varied flora including several notable species, as well as a diversity of breeding and regionally endangered birds such as the common snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and the common little bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*. Wintering and passage waterbirds include cormorants, swans, geese, ducks, shorebirds and terns. The main threats to the ecological character of the Site are posed by intensive agriculture, recreation activities such as moto-cross and hunting, and colonization by invasive species.

## Schorren van de Beneden Schelde

Site number: 327 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: Vlaamse Gewest

Area: 420 ha | Coordinates: 51°20'N 04°15'E | Designation dates: 04-03-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Schorren van de Beneden Schelde. 04/03/86; Vlaamse Gewest; 420 ha; 51°20'N 004°15'E. Added to the Montreux Record, 4 July 1990. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserves, Classified Landscape. Three separate intertidal areas comprising the last remaining area of brackish, intertidal flats and marshes in Belgium. A border is shared with the Netherlands. The intertidal flats support a typical invertebrate fauna. An important area for numerous species of wintering, staging and molting waterbirds. Human activities include recreation, sheep grazing and fishing. Surrounding areas are dominated by large industrial and port complexes and intensive agricultural land. The naturally dynamic character of the area is intensified by extensive dredging to maintain a deep-water shipping channel. Placed on the Montreux Record in 1990 because agricultural intensification led to severe nutrient-enrichment and lowering of the areas' water table. Site of the first Ramsar Advisory Mission in 1988. Ramsar site no. 327. Most recent RIS information: 1992.

## Vallée de la Haute-Sûre

Site number: 1,407 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: Wallonie

Area: 29,000 ha | Coordinates: 49°53'55"N 05°39'20"E | Designation dates: 08-03-2004

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Vallée de la Haute-Sûre is part of a Transboundary Ramsar Site in Belgium and Luxembourg, composed of a complex of forested wetlands, peatlands, wet grasslands, reed beds, springs and rural zones. The Esch-sur-Sûre barrage forms a 380 hectare reservoir in the Luxembourg part (Site number 1408). The valley's mosaic of habitats supports internationally-threatened mammals including the European otter *Lutra lutra*, the brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, the common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus Pipistrellus* and the badger *Meles meles*. It also supports some 20 species of fish, as well as the endangered freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritefera margaritifera* which depends on the river trout *Salmo trutta* for the first stages of its development. Besides typical wetland plants such as *Comarum palustre* and *Menyanthes trifoliata*, the rare *Epipactis palustris* and *Pedicularis palustris* are also present. The Site is an important stopover and nesting area for many birds, notably the black stork. The barrage provides drinking water for 80% of Luxembourg's population. Pollution from intensive agriculture and untreated wastewater have affected the water quality of the River Sûre and its tributaries, while the introduction of resinous tree species has upset the balance of aquatic ecological communities. Uncontrolled activities such as hunting, water sports, leisure fishing and cycling also disturb the Site. For the Belgian part of the Site, a management plan has been implemented since 2007. Several projects (including transboundary projects) have supported the protection and restoration of wetlands and raised public awareness.

## Vlaamse Banken

Site number: 326 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: Vlaamse Gewest

Area: 1,900 ha | Coordinates: 51°09'59"N 02°44'E | Designation dates: 04-03-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Vlaamse Banken. 04/03/86; Vlaamse Gewest; 1,900 ha; 51°10'N 002°44'E. Special Protection Area EC Directive. A beach zone and adjacent marine waters overlying submerged banks. The area is used by large numbers of wintering grebes and sea-ducks and provides important winter foraging and roosting areas for numerous species of shorebirds. Human activities include commercial fishing, water-based recreation, sand and gravel extraction. Ramsar site no. 326. Most recent RIS information: 1992.

## Zwin

Site number: 328 | Country: Belgium | Administrative region: West-Vlaanderen

Area: 530 ha | Coordinates: 51°21'N 03°22'E | Designation dates: 04-03-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Zwin. 04/03/86; Vlaamse Gewest; 530 ha; 51°21'N 003°22'E. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserve, Classified Landscape. Sharing the border with the Netherlands the site, created as bird habitat in the 1960s, consists of saltmarsh, mudflats, creeks and artificial brackish pools connecting it to the North Sea. The mudflats support pioneer vegetation communities, the saltmarsh consists of numerous species of salt-resistant plants. An important area for staging, roosting, wintering and breeding various species of water birds. Ramsar site no. 328. Most recent RIS information: 1992.