

## Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated: 28 January 2001

2. Country: Algeria

3. Name of wetland: Grande Sebkhia d'Oran

4. Geographical coordinates:

35° 22' North latitude  
0° 48' West longitude

5. Altitude: 110 metres above sea level

6. Area: 56,870 hectares

7. Overview

The Grande Sebkhia d'Oran, extending south of the city of Oran, at an altitude of 110 metres, is a closed depression bounded on the north by the Mordjadjo mountains, whose highest altitude is 589 metres, and in the south by the Tessala mountains whose highest altitude is 1,061 metres. Alluvial deposits have levelled the bottom of this depression at 80 metres with a slight dissymmetry in the eastern part. Fed by the run-off of the water basin, water from the *sebkhia* is always brackish.

8. Wetland type:

Marine: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, Zk(a)

Continental: L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, Sp, Ss, Ts, U, Va, Vt, W, Xf, Xp, Y, Zg, Zk(b)

9. Ramsar criteria: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Criteria that best characterize the site: 610.

10. Map of site included? Please tick yes -or- no.

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page:

Criteria 6:

For several years, the Grande Sebkhha was the habitat for 1 per cent of the world population of two species: the pink flamingo and the *tadorna de Belon*.

1992	1994	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
970 <i>tadornes</i>	1200 <i>tadornes</i>	-	1076 <i>tadornes</i>	-	-	-
1780 flamingos	2250 flamingos	2870 flamingos	-	3055 flamingos	1860 flamingos	7220 flamingos

13. General location:

The Grande Sebkhha is located in the wilaya of Oran, daïra de Boutlelis, commune of Messerghine, 13 kilometres from the Mediterranean and 15 kilometres from the city of Oran.

14. Physical features:

**Geology:** The Grande Sebkhha is a large depression with endorheic drainage. Tectonic in origin, it appeared at the end of the Pliocene (Villafranche) and at the beginning of the Quaternary, a period when a topography of closed basins (the two anticlines of the Mordjadjo to the north and the Tessala in the south) dominated in the Oranian Telle. The runoff from these two mountain ranges gathers in the syncline that today forms the Grande Sebkhha. Continental deposits from the Pliocene and Quaternary have contributed to fill and level most of the M'Leta plain. These deposits have been carried to the bottom of the Grande Sebkhha, which is 80 metres above sea level.

**Hydrology:** The Grande Sebkhha d'Oran, which occupies the centre of a sedimentary water basin from the Miocene, is a large area of aeolian erosion. The results of this erosion, which reached its peak in the Grimeldien accumulated around the *sebkha*, formed clay ridges.

**Climate:** The climate is hot, semi-arid Mediterranean, and annual rainfall varies between 378 and 473 millimetres.

**Water basin:** The large units of the water basin of the *sebkha* are represented by the Tessala hills, located north of the *sebkha*, which are a range oriented west, southwest and east to north. The highest point is at 1,061 metres. The water

basin covers an area of 59,960 hectares. The southern slope of the Mordjadjo, located north of the Grande Sebkhah, is cut into a series of limestone valleys resembling canyons. The gorges, 100 metres deep, are cut by temporary *oueds*, which flow underground in the alluvial beds from the Quaternary along the northern edge of the site.

15. Hydrological values:

It is a sediment sump and absorbs flooding because of its low altitude.

16. Ecological features:

The Grande Sebkhah is formed by a thin layer of water, which lacks vegetation. Around the *sebkhah* there is halophytic vegetation of *Sueda* spp., *Juncus* spp. and small clumps of *Chamaerops humilis*. A few rare specimens of tamarisk can be found near the shores.

17. Noteworthy flora:

This *sebkhah*, for which the vegetation has not yet been studied, does not appear to have an outstanding flora.

18. Noteworthy fauna:

One of the characteristics of the Grande Sebkhah is the presence of large numbers of pink flamingos and *tadorne de Belon*, whose numbers often exceed 1 per cent of the world population. Many migratory species that take the western migration route near Gibraltar stop in the wetlands of western Oran, especially those that prefer the shallow wetlands, such as waders, cranes and pink flamingos. Within the region of Oran, the Grande Sebkhah seems to be a privileged site for these birds.

19. Social and cultural values:

The wetland is used by the local inhabitants for grazing.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

At the site: the Grande Sebkhah is in the public domain.

In the surrounding area: The land used for agriculture is private land.

21. Current land use:

The surrounding areas are used for agriculture; the water basins contain Aleppo pine, eucalyptus, *chêne liège* and *thuya*.

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

Several attempts have been made to drain the Grande Sebkhah, and at the present time, several parts are used as dumps by the local inhabitants and several small industries. The Conservation des forêts d'Oran is carrying out a programme for the protection of this wetland, but several attempts to convince the local authorities to stop these phenomena have been unsuccessful.

23. Conservation measures taken:

Currently, there is no specific conservation measure for this area.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

Nothing

25. Current scientific research and facilities: None

26. Current conservation education:

Nothing

27. Current recreation and tourism:

Nothing

28. Jurisdiction:

The Grande Sebkhah is public water domain, under the jurisdiction of the government. At the regional level, it is managed by the services des ressources hydriques of the Wilaya of Oran.

29. Management authority:

Direction de l'Hydraulique of the wilaya of Oran

30. References: