TRANSLATION (2nd December 1994, Dave Fawcett)FROM ORIGINAL SPANISH TEXT SENT 26TH MAY 1994 BY INSTITUTO NACIONAL PARA LA CONSERVACION DE LA NATURALEZA (ICONA)
[Square brackets indicate translator's notes. The direct translations of Spanish common names may not always equal the common name used in English. I have left the translation in quotation marks (") where I felt that this may be the case. Spanish common names etc. that I could not translate have been left in italics. ~ Indicates text is present in the original but has not yet been translated.]

[Site ref: 7ES028]

MARISMAS DE SANTOÑA

1. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION. BOUNDARIES

The Marismas de Santoña, Victoria & Joyel are situated in the North of the Iberian Peninsula, in the Autonomous Community [admin 1] of Cantabria, constituting three coastal wetlands, with the first of these being a typical estuary. The centre of the complex approximates to the geographical coordinates: 30TVP620100.

The total complex has an area of 6,907 ha, with the maximum altitude (378 m) being at the Alto de Peña Ganzo (Monte [forest] Buciero). The Marismas [="wetlands" or "marshes"] de Santoña site, situated in the most eastern part, (delimited within the Marismas de Santoña y Noja), has an area of 3,345 ha, of which 460 ha correspond to the Monte Buciero oak grove, whilst the Marismas Victoria, located in the central part, have an area of 150 ha. The Marimas de Joyel, in the extreme west of the complex, have an area of 249 ha. The rest of the territory includes mainly meadows. as well as including beaches, dunes, cliffs, some Cantabrian oak groves of *Quercus ilex*, small plantaions of eucalyptus *(Eucaliptus globulus)* and pine *(Pinus radiata)*, and some areas of "countryside", the latter being an area dotted with small settlements and dispersed single family dwellings.

The complex is included within the municipal area of Santoña, Laredo, Colindres, Limpias, Ampuero, Voto, Bárcena de Cicero, Esclante, Argoños, Noja and Arnuero.

1.2. CLIMATOLOGY

~not yet translated

1.3. HYDROLOGICAL AND HYDROGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS

~not yet translated

1.4. GEOMORPHOLOGY

~not yet translated

1.5. FLORA. VEGETATION COMMUNITIES.

In the complex of Las Marismas de Santoña, Victoria y Joyel and their zone of influence, there are distinct types of well differentiated vegetation communities, owing to the variety of habitats present.

The Cantábrian oakwoods of *Quercus ilex*, situated in naturally calcareous rocky areas, are well represented in the Alto de El Cincho, Montes [="woodlands"] Mijedo (El Brusco), Montehano and Monte Buciero. In these oakwoods, the shrub layer is made up of evergreen species such as laurel *(Laurus nobilis)*, tree strawberry *(Arbutos unedo)* and *"aldierno" (Rhamnus alaternus)* . Likewise there are also deciduous shrub species such as the hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)* and the sloe *(Prunus spinosa)*. The Monte Buciero is considered to be the oak woodland of greatest scientific interest of all the Cornisa Cantábrica [Cantabrian Coast], owing to its size (460 ha) and to its being in contact with the cliff vegetation communities, being able through this to study the limiting factors of woodland in coastal environments.

The saltmarsh vegetation presents an assemblage of halophylic communities, distributed on various levels, according to their position in the saltmarsh, and depending on the tide. In the creeks and areas which spend most of the time submerged, beds of *Zostera marina* grow, and above these, in areas uncovered at the majority of low tides, are found monospecific beds of *Zostera noltii*. In a higher strata monospecific beds of *Spartina maritima* are found. Yet higher than these and in areas which are flooded by most high tides, is a saltmarsh community formed by the following species of phanerogams: *Halimione portulacoides, Inula crithmoides, Athrocnemum perenne, A. fruticosum, Aster tripolium, Triglochin maritima, Puccinellia maritima, Spergularia media,*

Limonium vulgare, Salicornis perennis, S. ramosissima, Suaeda maritima, etc. These last two species are also found in open areas, upwards from the level of *Zostera noltii.* In the upper limit, where the influence of the tide is weak, and the prescence of freshwater becomes evident, there are reedbeds of *Scirpus maritimus* and rushbeds of *Juncus maritimus, J.gerardii* and *Carex extensa*. In freshwater areas, there are *Phragmites* and *Typha.* Together with the above mentioned phanerogam species is found an algal community, which in the area of the estuary is principally made up of species which can bear rapid changes in salinity and periods of dessication like: *Fucus ceranoides, F. vesiculosus, Bostrychia scorpioides, Gracillaria* sp., and the chlorophyceas *Enteromorpha* sp. and *Ulva* sp.

In the area of dunes (Ris, Helguera, Berria, El Regatón) near the sea, are found: *Ammophila arenaria, Euphorbia paralias, Erygium maritimum, Cakile maritima, Carex arenaria, Aetheorrhiza bulbosa,* and in some of the rear ones, are found: *Helichrysum stoechas, Lagurus ovatus,* and *Pancratium maritimum.*

On the cliffs, mainly on the one corresponding to Monte Buciero, are found a halophlic vegetation, with, in the areas nearest the sea: *Crithmum maritinum,* and *Plantago maritima.* In upper areas, where the soils are richer, there are *Armeria maritima, Limonium binervosum, L. ovalifolium,* and *Leotodon taraxacoides.* Above this level is found a lawn of *Festuca rubra* and amongst it *Silene vulgaris maritima* and *Daucus gummifer.*

1.6. FAUNA. VERTEBRATE COMMUNITIES.

~not yet translated

2. LAND REGIME

2.1. LAND USE

There is a much greater collection of activities and and exploitations occuring in these coastal wetlands than in most of the inland wetlands of the Iberian peninsula.

Fish and shellfish are exploited the Marismas de Santoña estuary. In the north and east are the fishing ports of Santoña and Colindres. The sport fishing of marine species is common both from the shore and from boat.

Eels *Anguila anguilla* and salmon *Salmo salar* pass through the estuary on their annual migrations, heading up to the río Asón, and there are fisheries of both these species.

Likewise there is exploitation of seafood, principally of molluscs, like "fine/slender" clam *(Vanerupis decussatus), "carracacho" (Cardium edule),* flat oyster *(Ostrea edulis)* and *"muergos"* and *"morgueras" (Ensis* sp. and *Solen* sp.).

In recent years two marine aquaculture installations have been set up for fattening clams, though one of these is not in operation.

In addition to the above exploitation, there is a small fishery of *"quisquillas"* [=shrimp/prawn] and *"esquilas"* [means "clippers": ?=another type of prawn?] *(Palaemon serratus & Crangon crangon),* and cuttlefish *(Sepia officinalis).* Benthic worms *(Arenicolas* sp. and other species) and sipunculids *(Sipunculus nudus)* are likewise collected by shore-side fishermen for use as bait. Near the mouth of the estuary, and in the proximity of the Puntal de Laredo, there is a recreational port. There may have been hunting on the wetland, but currently it is prohibited.

Farming is found bordering the areas of open water, and in many cases on lands arisen from *"rellenos*" [=in-filled?] in the intertidal zone, and occupying the whole of the surface of the zone, in a network of fields, and dispersed cattle farming. This land is fundamental for many waterbird species associated with the wetland.

Some small plantations of *Eucaliptus globulus* and *Pinus radiata* punctuate the complex. In the Monte [=woodland] Buciero there used to be a small dispersed goat herd, but only a little of this remains today.

In addition to the preserved fish industry situated in the towns and settlements next to the wetlands, there is an assemblage of small preserving installations which surround the Santoña estuary. Together with these and there is some dispersed metal industry near the course of the río Asón.

The two limestone quarries (of Montehano and El Sorbal) are currently inactive, pending the conclusion of the

Plan de Ordenación de los Recursos Naturales ["Land-use Regulation Plan" for Natural Resources].

Tourism and the proximity of the beaches have caused considerable growth of the nearby urban centres, and the development of a good number of small settlements, as well as scattered building, hotels, single-family dwellings, etc. which amounts to a strong development pressure, with implications, amongst many others, for the cleaning-up of the wetlands' catchment waters.

2.2. LAND OWNERSHIP
~not yet translated

2.3. FORM OF PROTECTION
~not yet translated

3. CRITERIA OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

3.1. WATERBIRDS
The Las Marismas de Santoña, Victoria y Joyel complex constitutes the most important wetland of the "peninsular north" [presumbly meaning *"the north of the Iberian penisula"*] for waterbirds, with the greatest number of species (up to 86) and individuals (greater than 20,000). The wetland meets the numerical criteria of the Ramsar Convention for being considered of international interest.

The spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* uses the wetland principally on passage during its pre- and post-nuptual migrations. More than 50% of the spoonbill population of Holland pass through these saltmarshes on pre-nuptual migration. Up to 90 individuals have been counted.

Censuses have been conducted in the wetland since 1969, reaching counts of more than 20,000 waterbirds.

Likewise the prescence of the black-necked grebe *Pociceps nigricollis* and the great cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo,* should be mentioned, with - respectively - up to 218 and 429 birds counted.

The eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope* is the most numerous wintering species on the complex (up to 6,500). On migration, 2,221 individuals of the shoveler *Anas clypeata* have been censused. Occasionally the white-headed duck *Oxyura leucocephala* has been observed (up to 5 individuals).

Regarding numerical criteria amongst the waders, up to 225 avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* have been counted, up to 1,389 grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* have been counted wintering in the area, and up to 150 *"cigüeñuela" (Himantopus himantopus)* have been censused.

Larus delawarensis has been reported, and up to 4 individuals of the "red-billed *pagaza" (Sterna caspia)* [?=Caspian tern?].

In the last few years , the number of species of nesting waterbirds has risen, these being:
[see list of 14 species, penultimate paragraph of section 3.1 in original]
It is necessary to emphasise that this saltmarsh complex is the only breeding site in the north of the penisula for: purple heron, *"avetorillo" (Ixobrychus minutus),* red-crested pochard, and *"cigüeñuela" (Himantopus himantopus).*

4. MANAGEMENT PLAN

A *"P.O.R.N" - Plan de Ordenación de los Recursos Naturales* ["Land-use Regulation Plan" for Natural Resources] for the Reserva de Las Marismas de Santoña y Noja, is currently being drawn up (and expected to be ready in the first half of 1994). When that *P.O.R.N.* is approved, the corresponding Management Plan for the designated complex *[i.e.the Ramsar site itself]* will be drawn up, following the criteria in this document.