

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

## 1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

29. 09. 92

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD	MM	YY

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

## 2. Country:

France (Guyane)

## 3. Name of wetland: Basse-Mana

## 4. Geographical coordinates: from 5°35' N / 53°30' W to 5°45' N / 53°57' W to 5°36' N / 54°00' W

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.) 0-5 m

6. Area: (in hectares) 59,000 ha including 15,000 ha sea and 44,000 ha land

7. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

This assemblage of coastal ecosystems is unstable and undergoes cyclical upheavals of silt growth and erosion due to deposits of clay alluvium and strong currents.

8. Wetland Type (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex I of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

Marine and coastal wetlands (1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

marine-coastal: A . B . C . D . E . F . G . H . I . J . K

inland: L . M . N . O . P . Q . R . Sp . Ss . Tp . Ts  
. U . Va . Vt . W . Xf . Xp . Y . Zg . Zk

man-made: 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . 5 . 6 . 7 . 8 . 9

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant:

9. Ramsar Criteria: (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12, next page.)

1a . 1b . 1c . 1d | 2a . 2b . 2c . 2d | 3a . 3b . 3c | 4a . 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

10. Map of site included? Please tick **yes**  -or- **no**  the seaward limits of the wetland are set 2 km from the tidal flats uncovered at low spring tide.

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

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

cf. section 4 French original

*Please provide additional information on each of the following categories by attaching*

**extra pages (please limit extra pages to no more than 10):**

**12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.** (Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document). The wetland is of international importance for criteria 1c and 2a (leather-back turtle, olive loggerhead turtle, scarlet ibis, roseate spoonbill, wood stork), 2b, 2c, 3a.

**13. General location:** (include the nearest large town and its administrative region) Between the Organabo River and the Maroni River (border with Surinam) from west to east of Mana.

**14. Physical features:** (e.g. geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

Holocene plain consisting of sandy barrier beaches, freshwater and brackish swamps, marine clays, mudflats, coastal mangrove forests with white and grey mangroves, swampland forests and pinot palm *Euterpe oleracea* stands.. The water mass in the swamps varies according to the season: brackish swamp salinity is lowest in the rainy season, and at its highest in the dry season from August to December. In November 2/3 of the "Sarcelle" swamp dry out almost completely, with only the seawater outflow channels still covering some of the area. Much of the seawater input in the swamps comes from the sea washing over the barrier beaches at particularly high tides (Rossignol 1972). Tidal amplitude varies between 2 -3.6 m. The region has record hours of sunshine and low rainfall.

**15. Hydrological values:** (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

One of the principal points of interest is the alternation between erosion and growth of silt deposits. Greater erosion at one point (current confluence) is offset further east (cyclonic zone) by large mud deposits (mudflat formation), preceding future coastal growth. The particular system of marine currents washes inshore and provides a haven for the growth stage of post-larval shrimp *Penaeus aztecus subtilis* (Rossignol 1972).

**16. Ecological features:** (main habitats and vegetation types)

De Granville (1976) defines four vegetation groupings in the "Savane Sarcelle": group I with *Ipomea pes-caprae* and *Canavalia maritima*, group II with *Mariscus ligularis* and *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, group III with *Eleocharis mutata* and *Avicennia nitida*, group IV with *Hydrocotyle umbellata* and *Jussiaea leptocarpa*. The beaches are important nesting sites for turtles, the mudflats are wintering grounds for many North American waders: the white mangroves *Avicennia germinans*, which often flood at high water, shelter breeding colonies of Ardeidae.

**17. Noteworthy flora:** (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc)

Forest under *Euterpe oleracea* and *Mauritia flexuosa*. Floristic diversity increases in inverse proportion to salinity from the shore inland (De Granville 1976). Landward from the beaches are large orchid cactus *Cereus hexagonus* formations. Near the Organabo River is a forest on white, pure silica sands with characteristic vegetation: *Clusia nemorosa*, *C. fockeana* (Clusiaceae), *Humiria floribunda*, *H. balsamifera* (Humiriaceae), *Licania incana* (Chrysobalanaceae), *Bombax flaviflorum* (Bombacaceae), etc. The coastal mangroves are intact and unexploited. Their presence is closely dependent on the east-west displacement of the clay bars pushed by the equatorial current, which is in its turn caused by the trade winds. The new salt mud deposits are first colonised and fixed by grey mangrove *Laguncularia racemosa* (Combretaceae), followed by *Avicennia germinans* (De Granville 1986).

**18. Noteworthy fauna:** (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.)

A fine crab-eating racoon *Procyon cancrivorus* population. Cats: jaguar *Panthera onca*, ocelot *Felis pardalis*, jaguarundi *Felis yagouarundi*. Other large mammals include white-tailed deer *Odocoileus virginianus*, capybara *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*, tayra *Eira barbara*, red howler *Alouatta seniculus*.

American manatee *Trichechus manatus* are common in the estuaries but numbers are unknown. The mudflats are feeding grounds for numerous wader species. The young mangroves maintain nesting and breeding colonies of several species of Ardeidae (*Casmerodius albus*, *Egretta thula*, *Florida caerulea*, *Hydranassa tricolor*, *Ardea cocoi*...) and scarlet ibis *Ibis ruber*. Roseate spoonbill *Ajaja ajaja*, American jabiru *Jabirus mycteria* and wood stork *Mycteria americana* are also present. The very rare red-shouldered macaw *Ara nobilis* nests in the dead tree trunks of the fibre palm. The region is internationally renowned for its beaches, the most important nesting ground in the world for leatherback turtle *Dermochelys coriacea* (over 1,000 females on a 2 km beach). The beaches are also important for olive loggerhead *Lepidochelys olivacea* and green turtle *Chelonia mydas*. Dujardin (1986) puts the number of wildfowl species in Basse-Mana at 85. The name Marais Sarcelle comes from the large number of ducks which stop off there: black-bellied tree duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*, muscovy duck *Cairina moschata*, blue-winged teal *Anas discors*, white-cheeked pintail *Anas bahamensis*. The common iguana *Iguana iguana* also breeds on the beaches.

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**19. Social and cultural values:** (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)

Social: importance of nature tourism to observe turtles during the laying season: bathing on Yalimapo beach (never silted up, contrary to other beaches in Guyane); important turtle study and protection station (since 1977); rich fishing grounds for sheatfish (Amerindian fishing cooperative at Awala); venue for school nature study trips.

Cultural: important site for the Tilewuyu Amerindians; headquarters of the Guyane Amerindian Federation; archaeological sites (Amanapotili, Yalimapo, Awala) with potsherds (remains of funeral urns); acceptably low levels of turtle egg collecting for family consumption.

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**20. Land tenure/ownership of:** Most of the area is State-owned (French) marine waters.

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**21. Current land use:**

(a) site: Zone 1 is occupied by two Tilewuyu (Galibi) villages, Awala and Yalimapo, with about 640 inhabitants. The Indians fish the ocean, hunt (especially in zones 1 and 2) and farm (some clearings are under cultivation at the site).

(b) surroundings/catchment: 4,500 ha are under rice in zones 2 and 3.

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

(a) at the site:

Long-term urban development in Awala Yalimapo commune replacing traditional Amerindian dwellings; increase in population (estimated to triple in the next 20 years).

Introduction and multiplication of domestic animals (dogs, cats, chicken) constituting a threat to wildlife.

Rice growing (river drainage, polderised swamps, herbicide and pesticide pollution).

Hunting (birds, mammals, caimans), slaughter of turtles, poaching turtle nests.

(b) around the site: idem

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**23. Conservation measures taken:** (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented)

Prefectoral Decree No. 2312 ID/2B, 27/11/1982, on the protection of turtles on State-owned lands in the Hattes district.

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**24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:** (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

- Various projects to classify the site as a nature reserve have been put forward over the last twenty years (cf. attached document), one of the latest being taken as far as the public enquiry stage by the Minister of the Environment M. Michel Crepeau.

- Current project for a Regional Nature Park.
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**25. Current scientific research and facilities:** (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)

Research is focused mainly on turtles (Ministry of Environment/ Natural Heritage Authority fund, EEC, WWF). There is a small centre at Yalimapo ("Les Hattes" hatchery), with researchers from the Paris Natural History Museum and ... (the rest of the sentence is lost in the French original).

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**26. Current conservation education:** (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)

The Yalimapo site (zone 1) is frequently visited by school groups of all ages. Turtles can be watched while laying their eggs, and the coastal sites can be visited. There is a mini-museum at Yalimapo, and there is a plan to build a turtle museum and a reception centre for pupils at A Kanawa Bo.

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**27. Current recreation and tourism:** (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)

The beach at Yalimapo (zone 1) is both a daytime bathing beach during the weekends and an observation point for turtles laying their eggs at night. There are at present no residential facilities available, although a project is being studied. Visitors to the Yalimapo mini-museum and hatchery are given information on turtles and environmental conservation.

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**28. Jurisdiction:** (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)

State. Competent local authority (for conservation): DIREN Guyane, 28 Boulevard Jubeli, 97300 Cayenne

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**29. Management authority:** (name and address of local body directly responsible for managing the wetland)

Prefectoral management committee.

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**30. Bibliographical references:** (scientific/technical only) cf. annex

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