

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

1. Country: France **2. Date:** 1/Mar/93 revised 26/Sep/94 **3. Ref no: 7FR013**

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5. Name of wetland: Grande Brière, Marais du bassin du Brivet, Loire-Atlantique (44)

6. Date of Ramsar designation: 1 Feb 95

7. Geographical coordinates: 47°17'-47°28'N 02°07'-02°14'W

8. General location:

8km to the north of St Nazaire, in the north west of the department of Loire-Atlantique [=admin 2. Admin 1=region of Pays de la Loire].

9. Area: 19,000 ha

10. Type of wetland:

Flat peatland and alluvial marshes, reedbeds, floodplains, stretches of open water and canals.

11. Altitude:

0 to 10 m

12. Overview:

This is the second largest French marsh after the Camargue. The Grande Brière and the Marais du Brivet constitute an assemblage of floodable basins of about 20,000 ha to the north of the Loire.

13. Physical features:

- The marsh formation results from the filling in of basins by clays of marine origin, on top of which has built up a bed of peat with reedbeds and cyperaceae, to a depth of 1.5 to 2 metres.
- The Grande Brière occupies a tectonic depression on the southwest flank of the Savenay anticline, isolated from the sea, to the west, by the granitic massif of Guérande.

14. Ecological features:

Vast marshy area (flat peatland) where the vegetation can be divided into three main associations:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| - aquatic vegetation formation and open water | 300 ha |
| - reedbeds and aquatic wooded formation | 9,300 ha |
| - floodplains | 8,400 ha |

15. Land tenure/ownership of:

- (a) site:** - 13,000 ha of private marshes, managed by two landowners' syndicates
- 7,000 ha of common/joint owned marshes (Grande Brière), managed by a commission of syndics.
 - the three bodies are grouped together in a Union of Syndicates of Marais du Bassin du Brivet.

(b) surrounding area: private.

16. Conservation measures taken:

- Listed in the ZNIEFF inventory:

Type I: Le coin d'Enin (1003-0001)
Marais du Sud - Marais de Martigné (1003-0002)
Marais de Pingliau et de l'Hirondelle (1003-0003)
Marais de Besné (1003-0004)
La Boulaie Nord (1003-0005)
Marais d'Errand-Révin (1003-0006)
Marais de Grande Brière (1003-0007)
Marais du Haut Brivet (1003-0008)

- Listed in the ZICO inventory (PL02)
- Listed in the Habitats Directive
- Hunting Refuge Reserve: Grand Charreaux (700 ha) and Reserve du Nord (350 ha)
- Site listed in the supplementary inventory of sites (13/03/87)
- Classed in zone A of project M.A.R (IUCN 1965)
- Natural Regional Park since 1970
- Community Action for the Environment (ACE) financed by Crédits LIFE in 1992/94 for the restoration of "piardes" [?]
- Agro-environment: Local Measure (ex. art.19 -OGAF-Environment) - launched 01/01/95

17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

It would be desirable to see biotope decrees/orders applied and a nature reserve in Grande Brière and to give a more official status to hunting reserves (as national reserves). A ZPS classification is envisaged.

18. Current land use/ principal human activities in:

(a) site: Extensive livestock rearing on the periphery. Significant hunting and fishing activity. Exploitation of reeds to thatch housing. Tourism (boat tours).

(b) surrounding area: Extensive [i.e. non-intensive] agriculture based on rearing of cattle (meat, suckling heifers) and production of hay. Polyculture farming (outside of the marsh).

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

(a) site:

- The marshland complex, initially very exploited by man (extraction of peat and grazing), has been abandoned little by little, since the arrival of industry. The consequences are a very significant invasion and colonisation of land by hygrophilic [moisture-loving] vegetation (reeds, willows, elms). All this leads to a ecological degeneration (loss of biodiversity); 500 ha of stretches of water have disappeared in 40 years.
- Difficulties encountered in the management of water levels
- Tourism in the periphery

(b) surrounding area:

- agricultural "loss" [? hard to translate: loss of marshland to farming or reduction of farmland?]
- Urbanisation of the town of St-Nazaire - infrastructure
- Hydraulic projects on the rivers and canals
- Disturbance through the management of water levels. Supply of nutrient ions (nitrates) - eutrophication.

20. Hydrological and physical values:

The Grande Brière complex is an extraordinary freshwater "reservoir" in close relation with the Loire estuary by means of the Brivet basin. The fresh water is in contact with the brackish water of the estuary, which in the southern part of the marsh leads to biological diversity typical of environments with rising salinity.

21. Social and cultural values:

This region is of great interest as much on the cultural- as on the natural heritage level. The Regional Natural Park is closely tied in with valuing the cultural interest of this region. All traditional activity revolves around the marsh: hunting, fishing, canal transport [inland navigation], architecture, culinary traditions based on marshland produce, handicraft based on material from the marsh (thatch etc). All these traditional activities are shaped by entirely original [or bizarre] countryside.

22. Noteworthy fauna:

Nesting birds: Eurasian bittern 20 "c." [presumably an abbreviation of "couples" (=pairs) and not "circa"]
Purple heron 5-10 pairs
White spoonbill 3 pairs

Garganey	10-15 pairs
Shoveler	15-20 pairs
<u>Marsh harrier</u>	30-50 pairs
Coot	500 pairs
Spotted crake	
Water rail	
Common snipe	
Redshank	
Black-headed gull	40-50 pairs, "liberge" [released?] 100 pairs
<u>Whiskered tern</u>	0-120 pairs
<u>Black tern</u>	15-100 pairs
Bluethroat	0.3 per 10 ha in 1990
"Locustelle Luscinioïde" [? but not waterfowl]	
"Rousserolle Turdoïde" [? but not waterfowl]	

Wintering:

Common snipe	>300
Black-tailed godwit	maximum 800 (1989)
Wigeon	300 (1983)
Northern pintail	1000
Shoveler	1000 (1989 Plat de Rezé)
"Milouin" [? non waterfowl]	

Mammals: Very important site for the Otter and perhaps for the European Mink (no recent data).

23. Noteworthy flora:

See original for list of 20 species names (no indication of status)

24. Current scientific research and facilities:

- UER of Natural Sciences, Ecology Laboratory (palynological botany, fodder value of plants)
- University of Rennes, Paimpont Biological Station (ornithology)

25. Current conservation education:

Training course studies of natural environments and wildlife offered by the Brière Regional Natural Park and the Joubert à Donges Nature "Maison" [? Hostel] (Society for the Study and Protection of Nature in Bretagne). The Brière animal park receives numerous visitors, particularly school students.

26. Current recreation and tourism:

- Aside from hunting and fishing practiced exclusively by the people of Brière, tourism is very much in evidence in summer in certain parts of the Grande-Brière Mottière marshland (boat "ballades" [? trips], tours by foot or horse)
- Animal park (see 25)

27. Management authority:

PNR Brière, Syndicat Mixte Maison du Parc, Ile Fédrun 180, BP 3, 44720 ST-NAZAIRE

28. Jurisdiction:

No specific state jurisdiction, except for management of water (prefectorial decree) and designation of the site [i.e., presumably, to the Ramsar list]

29. References: *[see original for extensive list]*

30. Reasons for inclusion:

1a, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3b, 3c.