

INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR WETLANDS

1.- Country:

Spain.

2.- Date:

May.1992

3.- Ref.:

7ES014

4.- Name and address of the compiler:

Servicio de Protección de Espacios Naturales.
Dirección General de Conservación del Medio Natural
Conselleria de Medio Ambiente.GENERALITAT VALENCIANA.

5.- Name of Wetland:

Paraje Natural de El Hondo

6.- Date of Ramsar designation:

8.May.1990

7.- Geographical coordinates:

38° 10' N; 00° 45' E.

8.- General location:

Community of Valencia.Alicante province.Important
localities: Elche and Crevillente.

9.- Area:

2.387'2 Has.

10.- Wetland type:

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11.- Altitude:

Average: 6 m.Range between 3 m and 8'9 m.

12.- Overview;

The site lies in artificial ponds in a flooding tectonic hollow, surrounded by natural lagoons and saline flooding areas. It has a very natural appearance, because ground bars have been used as retaining walls.This is the second most important wetland in the Valencia Community.It holds a number of endangered especies.

13.- Physical features:

A tectonic deep has continuously been filled by postorogenic silts with a basically marine origin.The ponds are fed by the river Segura, heavily contaminated and with slightly brackish waters.The remaining wetlands are fed either with groundwater or with good quality, but slightly more saline, run-off waters.

The average depth of water is 1'5 m.

The soils are classified as gleysoles and solonchak.At

higher altitudes, cambisoles and fluvisoles.

Waters are permanent, although in summer the levels are quite lower.

The climate is arid - mediterranean type. Average temperatures are about 18^o C and the average rainfall are between 276 mm/year and 290 mm/year.

14.- Ecological features:

Four main habitats may be described:

- Beds of marsh vegetation belonging to the classes *Phragmitetea*, *Lemnetea* and *Potamotea* (*).
- Salt-tolerant vegetation belonging to the class *Arthrocnemetea*.
- Culture lands.
- Palm groves.

15.- Land tenure/ownership of:

a) site: The whole site is private. About 65 % belongs to the Comunidad de Riegos de Levante. The remaining surface are small plots, about 170, with an average surface of 14 Has.

b) surrounding areas: The land is divided in small plots belonging to many private individual.

16.- Conservation measures taken:

- The Generalitat Valenciana declared the site Natural Place (Paraje Natural). Decree 187/1988.
- The site has been attached to the National List of Wetlands of International Importance, on 8 May 1990.
- Also has been declared Special Conservation Area for Birds, as stated by The EEC Directive 79/409.

17.- Conservation measures proposed, but not yet implemented:

The Management Plan has initially been passed, but it is still in course.

18.- Current land use: principal human activities in:

a) site: - Water management to irrigate.
- Mainly agricultural, hunting and aquicultural uses. To a lesser extent, sportive uses, and some buildings.

b) surrounding/catchment: Mainly agriculture.

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

a) at the site:

MAJOR: Bad quality and shortage of waters feeding the ponds. There is a great social conflict due to a serious economic situation in the organisation that groups farmers with rights to use the pond waters for irrigation (Comunidad de Regantes).

OTHERS: Destruction of the natural vegetation caused by transformations into crops, rubbish and rubble thrown, sports, etc. Hunting and fishing activities, shortly controlled.

b) in the surrounding/catchment:

Draining works, canals, cementing of irrigation channels, etc. Waters resulting from urban, industrial and agricultural uses, are poured without purifying to watercourses feeding the

ponds. Pesticides and fertilizers, are used in crops.

20. Agricultural and physical values:

- Regulating catchment in case of floodings
- Water reservoirs feeding an irrigation scheme that reaches 40.000 Has.
- Natural water purifying function.

21.- Social and cultural values:

- The site has a high economic and social interest as a water supplier to 40.000 Has. of irrigated crops. Also it has economic interest due to hunting and fishing activities.
- Landscape value of both the site itself, and the fringing palm groves.
- Cultural interest because of the flora and the fauna holded by the area.

22.- Noteworthy fauna:

Endemic species like: *Aphanius iberus* and *Palaemonetes zariquieyi*.

The site owe its importance to nesting species, since are valid the Ramsar Criteria in *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Egretta garzetta*, *Ardea purpurea*, *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, *Oxyura leucocephala*, *Himantopus himantopus*, *Sterna albifrons*, *Chlydonias hybridus*, *Glareola pratincola*, *Ardeola ralloides* and *Acrocephalus melanopogon*. Additionally, other nesting species have interest: *Tadorna tadorna*, and possibly *Botaurus stellaris*. The site holds also 15.000 - 20.000 wintering anatidae. Also are regular *Phoenicopterus ruber* and *Circus aeruginosus*.

23.- Noteworthy flora:

El Hondo holds five communities which are endemic from the peninsular South and South-East:

- *Halimiono - Sarcocornetum alpini*
- *Cistancho lutae - Arthrocnemetum fruticosae*
- *Frankenio - Arthrocnemetum macrostachyi*
- *Frankenio corymbosae - Halocnemetum strobilacei*
- *Limonio caesii - Lygeetum sparti*

In addition to these communities, may be underlined the occurrence of *Cynomorium coccineum*, with a restricted distribution area.

24.- Current scientific research and facilities:

The bird population status is currently being monitorised.

At present, the marbled teal Recovery Plan, as well as the shelduck Management Plan, are being developed. A research on the occuring species of *Limonium*, is being carried out.

25.- Current conservation education:

At present, a conservation education programme, is being developed for visitors (adults and students) and consists of some guided itineraries through the site.

A birdwatching hide is the only available facility.

There is a brochure with details on the itinerary for general visitors, and a special booklet for scholar visits.

26.- Current recreation and tourism:

The monitors are making itineraries for adults (twice per day) from Mondays to Saturdays.

27.- Management authority:

Conselleria de Medio Ambiente. Direcció General del Medio Natural.

c/ Bailia 1.46003 Valencia.

28.- Jurisdiction:

Regional Government: Generalitat Valenciana.

29.- Bibliographical references:

NAVARRO MEDINA, J.D. (1985). Valor ornitológico del El Hondo. Generalitat Valenciana.

BOX AMOROS, M. (1987). Humedales y áreas lacustres de la provincia de Alicante. Instituto Gil Albert. Diputación de Alicante.

NAVARRO MEDINA, J.D. (1987). Estudio sobre las zonas húmedas alicantinas. El Hondo. (Unpublished).

CONSELLERIA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE (1991). Plan Rector de Uso y Gestión. (Unpublished).

30.- Reasons for inclusion:

1(a), 2(a), 3(b), 3(c).

31.- Map of the site:

O.K.