

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

1. Country: Portugal

3. Ref: 7PT003

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5. Name of wetlands: Paúl de Arzila (Arzila marsh)

7. Geographical coordinates: 40°40'N, 008°33'W

8. General location: Região Centro/Coimbra

9. Area: 585ha

10. Wetland type: S

11. Altitude: 92m (maximum); 3m (minimum)

12. Overview: Freshwater marsh in the lower Mondego valley. Permanently flooded wetland in a small valley on the southern bank of the Mondego river surrounded by pine forest and farmland. The marsh vegetation includes extensive reed beds (*Phragmites*).

13. Physical features: Natural wetland on aluvial basin. Permanent flooding with important water depth changes throughout the year. Inondation by freshwater only with no tidal influences. Climate temperate with Atlantic influences.

14. Ecological features: The dominant feature of the wetland are its extensive reedbeds associated with *Salix* and similar trees. Also fringes of *Typha latifolia* and *Scirpus lacustris* in areas of deeper water. Habitat diversity is enhanced by a network of ponds and drainage channels running along the wetland. The forested areas on steep slopes around the wetland do afford considerable protection against disturbance to the core areas.

15. Land tenure/ownership of: (a) site: Most of the wetland area is privately-owned and belongs to a number of different people.

(b) surrounding area: Most farmland and forest areas around the wetland are privately owned in small plots.

16. Conservation measures taken: The area is a Nature Reserve under national law (Decreto-Lei no 219/88 from 27 June) and was declared a Special Protection Area under Article 4 of the EC Wild Birds Directive (79/409).

17. Conservation measures proposed: Full hydrological control measures in the whole catchment area not yet possible.

18. Current land use: (a) site: No permanent activities in most of the wetland area. Others

include traditional fishing, reed cutting and educational activities with school groups.

(b) surroundings/catchment: Traditional agriculture and forestry; small village (Arzila).

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

(a) at the site: Changes in the water table caused by activities in the agricultural areas nearby, unchecked growth of marsh vegetation in some areas.

(b) in the surroundings/catchment: Contamination of the water table in the wetland from urban sources, industry and chemicals used in agriculture around the marsh.

20. Hydrological and physical values: The wetland is very important for water retention and flood regulation in the lower Mondego valley.

21. Social and cultural values: One of the very few sites with this type of habitat now left in the whole lower Mondego area.

22. Noteworthy fauna: The area holds important breeding populations of *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Cettia cetti*, *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, *A. scirpaceus*, *Locustella luscinioides* and other marshland species but no population figures are currently available for any of these. The area is also of great importance for many overwintering bird species. The otter *Lutra lutra* also occurs regularly in this area.

23. Noteworthy flora:

24. Scientific research and facilities: Current research facilities based at Coimbra (Mus. Zool. Univ. Coimbra) and Lisboa (CEMPA/SNPRCN).

25. Conservation education: Visiting parties to the wetland come from Coimbra and other areas nearby. Visitors are briefed in the open on the edge of the wetland.

26. Recreation and tourism: Recreational and tourist activities are virtually nil in this wetland.

27. Management authority: SNPRCN/Núcleo de Coimbra, R. Padre António Vieira, 1, 1^o, 3000 Coimbra, Portugal. Tel: +351 39 22 151, Fax: +351 39 25 3522

28. Jurisdiction: National jurisdiction/Min. Environment

29. Bibliographical references: Ferrand de Almeida *et al.* 1983; Grimmett & Jones 1989; Rufino 1992; SNPRCN 1992.

30. Reasons for inclusion: This wetland is an exceptionally representative case under 1a and 1d; the site is very important also under 2a, 2b and 3b.

31. Map of Site: enclosed.