Etang de Saint-Paul in Réunion named as a Ramsar Site

20 August 2019

France

France has designated Etang de Saint-Paul as its 49th Wetland of International Importance (Site no. 2398). It is the first Ramsar Site in the French overseas region of Réunion.

The Site covers 485 hectares in the western part of the island. It lies in an alluvial plain, and saltwater intrusions from underground sources mix with fresh water, creating brackish waters in parts of the Site. This creates a diversity of habitats, which positively influences the biodiversity of the Site and of the Mascarene Archipelago as a whole.

The Site particularly helps to support species that need salt and fresh water for their life cycle. 16 plant and 11 animal species found in Etang de Saint-Paul, including three birds, six fish, one crustacean and one insect, are categorized as threatened in the Mascarene Islands. The wetland is also a major habitat for various waterbirds, such as striated heron and common moorhen.

Because of its proximity to the densely populated city of Saint-Paul, the Site is threatened by human activities such as the gathering of natural resources and unsustainable water uses. A management plan is implemented to preserve its hydrological and ecological characteristics against these threats.

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