France’s new Ramsar Site in the Mozambique Channel

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Mozambique
France

The government of France has designated its 42nd Wetland of International Importance, an exceptionally interesting low-lying island in the Mozambique Channel, with a central lagoon enclosed by mangroves, and surrounding waters. In a summary prepared by Ramsar’s Assistant Advisor for Europe, Ms Kati Wenzel, based on the accompanying RIS, Île d’Europa (Terres Australes et Antarctiques françaises) (205,800 hectares, 22°21’00”S 040°21’00”E), a Nature Reserve and Important Bird Area (IBA), is surrounded by a “fringing reef”, interrupted by sandy beaches, which constitute one of the world's most important breeding and nesting sites for the globally endangered Green Sea Turtle *Chelonia mydas*. The site also offers habitat to the globally endangered Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idea*, Fin whale *Balaenoptera physalus* and Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna lewini*.

It supports a high number of nesting sea birds including two subspecies endemic to the Indian Ocean: Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lhermiieri bailloni* and Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata nubilosa*. Reefs, mangroves and sea grass beds are critical in protecting and stabilizing the island's coastline and supporting nesting bird and fish species. Largely undisturbed by human activities, the island is of great scientific significance, constituting an open-air laboratory for the study of the natural evolution of island ecosystems and global change. Threatening factors include introduced species such as goats and rats as well as several plant species.

Île d'Europa is the Convention's 2051st Ramsar Site, presently covering 193,810,395 hectares worldwide.
Photo: Thomas P. Peschak
Délimitation de la zone RAMSAR proposée et unités géomorphologiques de l’île d’Europa

Sources: