



Italy designates four new Ramsar sites

9 March 2007

Italy



Four new Ramsar sites in Italy

The Ramsar Secretariat is delighted to announce that the Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio e del Mare in Italy has designated four new Wetlands of International Importance, effective as of 13 December 2006. All of them are quite small, but all are extremely important for migratory and other birds and for a number of other rare and threatened species - indeed, all four are Sites of Community Importance under the EU Habitats Directive and BirdLife

International "Important Bird Areas". Lago di San Giuliano (2,118 hectares) and Pantano di Pignola



(172

ha) are both in the southern region of Basilicata, and Oasi del Sele-Serre Persano (174 ha) and Oasi di Castelvolturno o Variconi (195 ha) in Campania, also in the south. All are part of WWF Italy's Oasis and Reserves system and thus benefit from a number of educational, scientific, and restoration initiatives in collaboration with local authorities.

Italy now has 50 Ramsar sites (more than all but United Kingdom, Mexico, Australia, and Sweden), covering a surface area of 59,796 hectares. The Convention now has 1,650 sites covering 149,646,353 hectares.

Ramsar's Assistant Advisor for Europe, Monica Zavagli, has prepared brief descriptions of the new sites for the Annotated Ramsar List, accompanied by some photos provided by the Ministry.

Lago di San Giuliano. 13/12/06; Basilicata; 2,118 ha; 40°38'N 016°29'E. Site of Community Importance EU Directive, Important Bird Area, Regional Nature Reserve. A lake and stream situated in a depression of the Bradano river basin. The wetland originated after the spontaneous return to natural conditions of an artificial basin created when a dam was built for irrigation purposes in the 1950s. The area is characterised by three different habitats: the natural lake, the riparian fringe, and a rocky ravine. A broad temporarily flooded meadow extends between the planted woodland and the lake edge. The site supports overwintering animal populations, in particular wildfowl, and provides refuge to one of the rarest mammals in the country: the otter *Lutra lutra*. The fish community of the Bradano river was profoundly altered by the building of the dam and by indiscriminate fishing practices; currently there are a number of common species and some endemic ones like the Italian bleak (*Alburnus albidus*) and rovello or South European roach (*Rutilus rubilio*). Around the lake there are old farms breeding mainly sheep and cattle; typical local products of agriculture and animal husbandry have also attracted tourism enterprises. Conservation education is part of a major WWF programme within the Reserve, and educational facilities have developed over the past ten years to address the public, school groups, and educators. Ramsar site no. 1663. Most recent RIS information: 2006.



Oasi del Sele-Serre Persano. 13/12/06; Campania; 174 ha, 40°37'N 015°08'E. Site of Community Importance EU Directive, Important Bird Area, Regional Nature Reserve. A reservoir that was created by the damming of the Sele River in the first half of the 20th century; the Oasis of Persano, the main portion of the wetlands, originated in 1981

following an agreement between WWF and the local water authorities. The surrounding landscape consists of inundated meadows, riparian woodland, flooded forest, fens and swamps. The dominant vegetation comprises *magnopotamion* and *hydrocarition* habitat types, typical of the Mediterranean Region. The most noteworthy protected species residing within the wetland is undoubtedly the otter (*Lutra lutra*) which is the most threatened mammal in the country. The area represents an interesting bird resting and nesting site for aquatic, riparian, macchia, and woodland species; it is also characterised by a rich herpetofauna. Small-scale agriculture is practiced by local residents, and there is a visitor's centre with nature trails and facilities for school visits. Ramsar site no. 1665. Most recent RIS information: 2006.



Oasi di Castelvoturno o Variconi. 13/12/06; Campania; 195 ha; 41°01'N 015°56'E. Site of Community Importance EU Directive, Important Bird Area, Regional Nature Reserve. A good example of a morphologically pristine site, belonging to the last remaining portion of a far more extensive complex of swamps drained between the 17th and 18th centuries. The site lies within the left bank of the Volturno delta in southern Italy and includes a freshwater pond and a saline lagoon separated by an artificial levee which connects the riparian strip with the mainland. The site, which hosts remarkable examples of arborescent halophilous vegetation, is part of the larger "Volturno Costa Licola Delta" Nature Reserve, which represents one of the areas endowed with the largest number of aquatic bird species within the whole Thyrrenian coastal area. Hundreds of species and thousands of specimens transit and/or spend winter by the ponds situated within the delta, among which *Podiceps* sp.pl., *Larus* sp.pl., *Sterna* sp.pl. and *Phalacrocorax carbo* are the most common. Upstream irrigation works are seen as a potential threat. The site is provided with a bird observation hut and a nature trail, and there are educational activities for schoolchildren in the region. Ramsar site no. 1664. Most recent RIS information: 2006.



Pantano di Pignola. 13/12/06; Basilicata; 172 ha; 40°36'N 015°45'E. Site of Community Importance EU Directive, Important Bird Area, Regional Nature Reserve. The wetland originated as a muddy pool collecting the contribution of a few springs. During the 1930s and '40s, under the fascist regime, the area was drained for farming development and to reduce the incidence of malaria. Towards the 1960s nearby fields were partially converted into a storage reservoir and now the site is currently undergoing a gradual return to natural conditions. This semi-natural basin of 2.5m depth is characterised by a varied and well-structured botanical community; fringe vegetation includes *Phragmitetum communis*, *Typhetum angustifoliae* and *Scirpetum lacustris*. Well represented are perennial grasses and sedge formations typical of the alluvial banks of large Mediterranean rivers. The lake also represents an important transit and nesting site for a number of residential and migratory bird species. Several farm tourism centres are developing in response to a growing demand for cultural tourism, as the area is renowned for its typical products like cheeses, wines and beans. WWF operates an active programme of conservation education. Ramsar site no. 1666. Most recent RIS information: 2006.



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