



Two new Ramsar Sites for the end of the year

22 December 2010

USA designates Humbug Marsh in Michigan as its 28th Wetland of International Importance

Humbug Marsh Ramsar Site (188 ha; 42°06'N 083°11'W) includes a freshwater lagoon and seasonal marshes which represent the last stretch of natural shoreline on the U.S. mainland connecting the lower and upper Great Lakes.

As summarized by Sofia Mendez, the site provides habitat for a number of species such as the Michigan Endangered Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and is considered essential for the preservation of migrating raptor species such as the Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) and other migrating waterfowl and passerines that stop over in the Ramsar Site. Moreover, its lagoon serves as spawning and nursery habitat for many fish species. Humbug Marsh's international importance has been recognized through its inclusion in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (IWR), North America's only IWR as well as through its designation as part of an Important Bird Area (IBA), its recognition as one of 34 Waterfowl Habitat Areas of Major Concern in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan; and its designation as part of an American Heritage River by U.S. Presidential Order.

In 2004, the Site was protected due to developers' attempts to negatively impact the wetland. Despite this protection, factors such as invasive species like *Phragmites australis*, sedimentation, and pollutants still threaten the site. Visitors from all over southeast Michigan, northwest Ohio, and southern Ontario come to Humbug Marsh for fishing, hunting, and paddling; other activities include environmental education for urban and rural schools and scientific monitoring. The management of this Ramsar Site is included in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and in an Environmental Assessment developed in 2005, which is currently being implemented.

Italy designates an alluvial plain as its 52nd Wetland of International Importance

Palude del Brusà - Le Vallette Ramsar Site (171 ha; 45°10'N 011°13'E) located in the Veneto Region, Verona, Cerea is also listed as Site of Community Importance (SCI), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Strict Nature Reserve. This Ramsar Site is located in the municipality of Cerea in the southern part of the Verona Province and is one of the largest wetlands remaining after drainage and reclamation of most of the surrounding area. As summarized by Kati Wenzel, the Menago River runs for 42 km from north to south through the region and flows into the Tartaro-Canal Bianco River. This site is an alluvial area originating from the accumulation of sediments transported by Quaternary glaciers and rivers that have filled the existing lagoon over the years. The habitat mainly consists of freshwater marshes and pools and constitutes one of the best preserved examples of its kind in the "Padano-Veneta" plain. The site supports three species of amphibians and reptiles named in the EU Habitat Directive, the *Triturus carnifex*, *Rana latastei* and *Emys orbicularis*. Moreover, the site has an important role as a resting, breeding and wintering area for many rare species of the "Pianura Padana" wetland system and several birds are mentioned in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, including *Aythya nyroca*, *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Ardea purpurea* and *Circus aeruginosus*. Approximately 150 species of birds are seen in the site throughout the year. Human activities in the wetland include harvesting of marsh plants (reeds and sedges), although this activity is gradually declining, and tourist activities which are slowly developing.

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