

Fichas Técnicas de Humedales Mediterráneos/Mediterranean Wetlands Technical Data



Foto D. Podgornik

Secovlje salt pans (Slovenia)

LOCATION

Adriatic coast, at the mouth of the Dragonja River, 12 km south of the town of Koper. Coordinates: 45°29'N 013°36'E

HYDROLOGICAL/PHYSICAL NOTES

Secovlje salt pans Landscape Park is a partly abandoned area of salt pans (averaging 0.5 m deep), including saltmarsh, *Phragmites* beds and a small area of tidal mudflats at the mouth of the canalised Dragonja River. This area has been continuously transformed, by the working of nature, into a series of diverse and more or less saline biotopes which supplement each other and form a closed ecosystem. The salt fields consist of basins of different evaporation grades and crystallization basins, where salt is harvested during the summer.

BIOLOGICAL/ECOLOGICAL NOTES

Salt pans have been operated in the Dragonja delta for hundreds of years but some areas were abandoned at the beginning of the present century, allowing the re-establishment of saltmarsh with *Salicornia sp.*, *Limonium sp.*, *Scirpus maritimus*, *Juncus maritimus* and *Phragmites australis*. In 1945, another area (Fontanigge) was abandoned and is now partly inundated by sea water and partly covered by halophytic vegetation with *Limonium sp.*, *Salicornia sp.* and *Artemisia sp.*

The site is important for breeding, staging and wintering waterbirds. Nesting species include *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Himantopus himantopus*, *Sterna hirundo* and *S. albifrons*. Staging birds include large numbers of *Limosa limosa*, *Tringa spp.*, *Calidris spp.* and *Philomachus pugnax*. Wintering waterbirds include *Gavia arctica*, *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, *Podiceps cristatus*, *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*, *Anas penelope*, *A. crecca*, *Aythya ferina*, *Mergus serrator*, *Fulica atra*, *Vanellus vanellus*, *Tringa totanus*, and *Larus spp.* A number of nationally rare invertebrates and halophytic plants occur within the site.

HUMAN USES

Prior to designation as a Landscape Park in 1989, a number of drainage ditches were dug in an attempt to drain some parts of the site. The area was also formerly used for hunting. There have been proposals for the establishment of fish farms. Nowadays, about 40% of the site (the Lera area) is composed of operational salt pans. The whole area is important for conservation education, outdoor recreation and scientific research. A museum complex has been set up in the abandoned Fontanigge salt-pans. The Museum of Salt-making consist of two restored salt-pans houses, their appertaining salt fields and once navigable Giassi channel.

CONSERVATION MEASURES

Nationally the area is designated a Nature Reserve (with four reserves: Ob Rudniku, Stojbe, Curto Pichetto, and Stare Soline). Both the local community and a private enterprise are involved in preparation of the management plan for Secovlje salt pans. The salt pans were in 1993 included, as the only wetland in Slovenia, on the list of Ramsar sites.

ADVERSE FACTORS

The most significant threat to the site comes from plans to build an irrigation dam on the Dragonja River, about 10 km upstream. There is some disturbance by recreational flying from a nearby airfield.

From:

- *A Directory of Wetlands of International Importance*. Ramsar Convention Bureau and Wetlands International, 1999.
- *Secovlje salt-pans Landscape Park*. Reg. Instit. For Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage, Piran. Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Slovenja