



S'Albufera (Mallorca, Spain)

• LOCATION

The site is situated about 6 km south-southwest of the town of Alcúdia, in the province of Palma de Mallorca, on the northeast coast of Majorca island (autonomous region of Balears). Coordinates: 39°49'N, 03°07'. Area: 1,700 ha. Elevation: 1 - 10 m.

• WETLAND TYPE

The site consists of an extensive freshwater marsh. It is separated from the sea by a sand dune bar. It is dissected by a network of dykes and drainage canals. Much of the area is covered by dense reed beds. There are only limited areas of open water.

• HYDROLOGICAL NOTES

The marsh is situated on thick layers of marine sediments. It gets its water from surface runoff and groundwater. There is a system of dykes and drainage canals, remaining from attempts to convert the wetland into irrigated agricultural fields.

• BIOLOGICAL/ECOLOGICAL NOTES

The park includes the major part of the wetland, which is 1,800 ha. The total area of natural interest is 1,900 ha. Large parts are covered by dense beds of *Phragmites australis* and *Cladium mariscus*.

There are also rushes and *Salicornia* beds. Lagoons and canals contain submerged macrophytes like *Potamogeton*, *Zannichellia* and *Myriophyllum*.

The canals are fringed by woodland and *Tamarix* scrub, but these have partly been cut down in the past.

The dune bar supports *Juniperus* scrub, with *Juniperus oxycedrus macrocarpa*, *Thymedaea velutina*, *Ophrys sp.* and *Orchis sp.*, but has been partly developed for tourism. In the marsh itself *Orchis palustris* is abundant.

The area is internationally important for breeding, staging and wintering birds. Nesting species include *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (>150 pairs), *Ardea purpurea* (30-50 pairs), *Ixobrychus minutus* (>50 pairs), *Botaurus stellaris* (2 pairs), *Circus aeruginosus* (9 pairs), *Himantopus himantopus* (100 pairs) and *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (500-1,000 pairs). *Pandion haliaetus* and *Falco eleonorae* feed in the area during the breeding season.

• HUMAN USES

Of the park, 80% is owned by national, provincial and local governments. The other parts are private property. The surrounding area is privately owned. Human activities within the site include conservation education, eco-tourism, controlled traditional fishing (mainly eel) and traditional collection of natural fibers (*Typha* and *Arundo*). There are a visitors centre and bird watching hides. The surrounding area is used for agriculture (inland) and tourism (along the coast).

• CONSERVATION MEASURES

The site was designated a Natural Park (Parque Natural), a Special Interest Natural Area and a Hunting Refuge (Refugio de Caza) by the Balearic government. Some 2,584 ha of the site has been declared an EU Special Protection Area for wild birds. A management plan has been made, and most of it has been implemented. Ramsar site from: 05/12/1989.

• ADVERSE FACTORS:

There are no threats from inside the site. Excessive growth of tourism along the coast may become a problem. The over use of groundwater for irrigation in the surrounding area may cause saltwater to come in from the sea to replace the freshwater, and the residues of pesticides and fertilisers may have negative effects when they flow into the reserve.

From: *A Directory of Wetlands of International Importance*.
Ramsar Convention Bureau and Wetlands International, 1999