

Fichas Técnicas de Humedales Mediterráneos / Mediterranean Wetlands Technical Data



Foto: Conselleria de Medio Ambiente

Parque Natural del Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca (Comunidad Valenciana, Spain)

• LOCATION

Mediterranean coast, about 30 km northeast of the city of Castellón (Comunidad Valenciana, in southeastern Spain. Coordinates: 40°14'N 000°12'E. Area: 812 ha.

• WETLAND TYPE / HYDROLOGICAL NOTES

Saline pools and marshes occupy the former lagoon, which also contains extensive areas of peat. The marsh has developed through long-term sedimentation in a former coastal lagoon. It is separated from the sea by a sand dune and calcareous gravel complex.

• BIOLOGICAL/ECOLOGICAL NOTES

The site comprises the largest marsh in the province of Castellón, with well-developed hydrophytic and halophytic plant communities which are in excellent condition. The principal vegetation types include aquatic (submergent and emergent), halophytic and dune communities. Along the edges of the basin there are freshwater plant communities.

The area is very important for a number of fish species (e.g. *Aphanius iberus* and *Valencia hispanica*) and invertebrates (e.g. the crustacean *Palaemonetes zariquieyi*), which are endemic to the Mediterranean coast. The site also supports several notable plants, such as *Limonium doufourii* (an endangered species which is endemic to Valencia); *Iris xiphium* and *Limonium angustibracteatum*, also endemic to Valencia; *L. densissimum*, which here reaches the northern limit of its range; and *Juniperus oxicedrus macrocarpa* (uncommon in Valencia). Nesting birds include *Circus pygargus*, *Glareola pratincola*, *Sterna albifrons*, *Acrocephalus melanopogon* and *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

• HUMAN USES / CONSERVATION MEASURES

Large parts of the site are owned by the provincial and local governments. The remaining areas are private property. Human activities in the area include commercial peat extraction, agriculture and grazing along the borders of the site, and hunting. It is surrounded by cultivated land. Designation date (Ramsar site): 05/12/1989. Natural Park designated by the Autonomous Government. It is also an EU Special Protected Area for wild birds.

The area has an important role in conservation education and there is a reception/interpretation centre for visitors. A management plan was initiated in 2002 with the aim of integrating traditional land uses with conservation objectives. Peat exploitation is regulated by a restoration plan. This specifies the shape and size of the pools that are created by the extraction, in order to meet the requirements of ecosystems.

Adverse Factors: Peat exploitation remains a problem. Agriculture and grazing. The site is becoming progressively more saline as a result of decreasing freshwater inflow and falling ground water levels, caused by extraction outside the area. Tourism and recreational activities along the beach cause serious disturbance during the summer and result in damage to the sand dunes.

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